

Advanced English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions

Tousif Rehman

03119086102

SET 1 · Idioms 1–10

1. Above and beyond

■ In excess of what is required or expected.
"She went above and beyond in her preparation of the report."

2. Above board

■ Entirely legitimate and transparent in conduct.
"All transactions were conducted above board."

3. Above one's station

■ Acting as though one has a higher social position than one actually occupies.
"His manner was considered by some to be above his station."

4. Above par

■ Better than average or the required standard.
"His performance was consistently above par."

5. Above reproach

■ Beyond criticism; entirely blameless.
"Her professional conduct was above reproach."

6. Above the fray

■ Uninvolved in a conflict or controversy.
"The statesman remained above the fray throughout the dispute."

7. Absolve of responsibility

■ To officially free someone from blame or duty.
"The inquiry declined to absolve the management of all responsibility."

8. Achilles' heel

■ A vulnerable point in an otherwise strong person or thing.
"His overconfidence proved his Achilles' heel."

9. The acid test

■ A decisive test of quality or worth.
"The acid test of the policy will be its implementation."

10. Across the board

■ Applying to all cases without exception.
"The pay rise was applied across the board."

SET 2 · Idioms 11–20

11. Act in concert

■ To work together in a coordinated and united way.
"The two regulatory bodies acted in concert to address the systemic risk."

12. An act of God

■ A natural disaster or event beyond human control or responsibility.
"The flooding was classified as an act of God for insurance purposes."

13. Act on instinct

■ To respond immediately and intuitively rather than after deliberation.
"On this occasion she acted on instinct, and it proved the right decision."

14. Add a caveat

■ To include a qualification or reservation to a statement.
"He added the caveat that the figures were preliminary and subject to revision."

15. Add fuel to the fire

■ To make a difficult situation worse.
"His inflammatory remarks only added fuel to the fire."

16. Add insult to injury

■ To make an already bad situation even worse.
"Being demoted after the failure was adding insult to injury."

17. Add one's pennyworth

■ To contribute one's own opinion, often when not particularly invited.
"Every member of the committee felt compelled to add their pennyworth."

18. An afterthought

■ Something considered only after the main plan or argument has been made.
"The provision for vulnerable groups appeared to be an afterthought in the policy."

19. Again and again

■ Repeatedly; time after time.
"She checked the figures again and again before submitting the report."

20. Against a rainy day

■ Saving resources for a future time of need.
"She set aside a modest sum each month against a rainy day."

SET 3 · Idioms 21–30

21. Against all odds

■ Despite very unfavourable circumstances.
"Against all odds, the small enterprise survived and flourished."

22. Against one's better judgement

■ Despite one's misgivings or reservations.
"Against his better judgement, he accepted the terms."

23. Against one's grain

■ Contrary to one's natural tendency or inclination.
"Accepting the compromise went entirely against her grain."

24. Against one's will

■ Without consent; under compulsion.
"He was forced to resign against his will."

25. Against the current

■ In opposition to prevailing opinion or practice.
"His position was decidedly against the current of academic thinking."

26. Against the grain

■ Contrary to one's natural inclinations.
"Following convention went against the grain for such an independent thinker."

27. Against the stream

■ In opposition to the prevailing direction or view.
"He swam against the stream, advocating restraint when war fever gripped the nation."

28. Ahead of one's time

■ Having ideas or attitudes too advanced to be accepted by contemporaries.
"His proposals were considered ahead of their time by most of his contemporaries."

29. Ahead of the curve

■ In advance of current thinking or trends.
"The institution had always prided itself on being ahead of the curve."

30. Air one's grievances

■ To express complaints or dissatisfaction openly.
"The meeting provided an opportunity to air long-standing grievances."

SET 4 · Idioms 31–40

31. All and sundry

■ Every person without exception.
"The invitation was extended to all and sundry."

32. All at sea

■ Confused and uncertain about what to do.
"Without proper guidance, the recruits were all at sea."

33. All ears

■ Giving full, attentive attention.
"The committee fell silent; they were all ears."

34. All hat and no cattle

■ Full of talk but lacking substance.
"The consultant's ambitious proposals were all hat and no cattle."

35. All in all

■ Taking everything into account; on the whole.
"All in all, the conference was a considerable success."

36. To all intents and purposes

■ Effectively; in every practical sense.
"To all intents and purposes, the matter had been resolved."

37. All roads lead to Rome

■ There are many different ways of reaching the same conclusion or goal.
"Whichever approach was followed, all roads seemed to lead to Rome."

38. All someone's geese are swans

■ To believe everything about oneself is better than it is.
"He was inclined to think all his geese were swans."

39. All things being equal

■ If other factors remain balanced or the same.
"All things being equal, the stronger candidate should be selected."

40. All things considered

■ Taking all relevant factors into account.
"All things considered, his tenure as director was successful."

SET 5 · Idioms 41–50

41. Allow leeway

■ To permit a degree of flexibility or tolerance.
"The regulations allow some leeway in how the requirement is interpreted."

42. The alpha and omega

■ The beginning and the end; the most essential part.
"Sound judgement is the alpha and omega of good governance."

43. Ample room for doubt

■ Considerable grounds for scepticism.
"There was ample room for doubt about the provenance of the documents."

44. To and fro

■ Back and forth; in alternating directions.
"The negotiations moved to and fro for many weeks."

45. Another pair of shoes

■ A completely different matter or situation.
"Writing a policy is one thing; implementing it is another pair of shoes."

46. Answer for

■ To be responsible or accountable for something.
"He would ultimately have to answer for the decisions taken in that period."

47. Appeal to authority

■ To support an argument by citing the opinion of an expert.
"One should not merely appeal to authority but examine the evidence directly."

48. Appeal to reason

■ To make an argument based on logic and rational argument.
"He appealed to reason in an attempt to defuse the passionate debate."

49. An apple of discord

■ A subject or object causing disagreement.
"The disputed inheritance became an apple of discord within the family."

50. Apple of one's eye

■ A person or thing cherished above all others.
"His youngest daughter was the apple of his eye."

SET 6 · Idioms 51–60

51. Apply pressure

■ To use influence or force to compel action.
"External bodies continued to apply pressure for greater transparency."

52. Apply the acid test

■ To subject something to a decisive practical test of its quality or genuineness.
"The new framework would be applied to the acid test of implementation."

53. Around the clock

■ Continuously throughout the entire day and night.
"The negotiations continued around the clock."

54. Arrive at a verdict

■ To reach a conclusion or decision after deliberation.
"After extended debate, the committee arrived at a clear verdict."

55. An arrow in the quiver

■ A resource or strategy available for use when needed.
"The new legislation gave prosecutors another arrow in the quiver."

56. As a last resort

■ When all other possibilities have been exhausted.
"The minister warned that military action would be used only as a last resort."

57. As a rule

■ Generally; in most cases.
"As a rule, the committee meets on the first Monday of each month."

58. As blind as a bat

■ Unable to see clearly; figuratively unaware.
"Without his glasses, he was as blind as a bat."

59. As busy as a bee

■ Very active and hardworking.
"She was as busy as a bee in the weeks leading up to the conference."

60. As circumstances warrant

■ According to what the situation requires.
"The response will be adjusted as circumstances warrant."

SET 7 · Idioms 61–70

61. As cunning as a fox

■ Very clever and deceitful.

"He was as cunning as a fox and never made a move without calculation."

62. As dry as dust

■ Extremely dull and uninteresting.

"The lecture was as dry as dust and few stayed to the end."

63. As dumb as a statue

■ Silent and uncommunicative.

"Under questioning, he remained as dumb as a statue."

64. As easy as ABC

■ Very simple and straightforward.

"With practice, the procedure became as easy as ABC."

65. As far as it goes

■ To the extent that it applies, but without going far enough.

"The reform is welcome, as far as it goes, but it does not address the root cause."

66. As good as one's word

■ Reliably keeping one's promises.

"He proved entirely as good as his word."

67. As hungry as a hawk

■ Extremely hungry.

"After the long journey, they arrived as hungry as hawks."

68. As if by magic

■ Seeming to happen through some mysterious or inexplicable process.

"The solution appeared, as if by magic, on the morning of the deadline."

69. As it stands

■ In the current state; without any changes.

"As it stands, the proposal is unlikely to receive the necessary support."

70. As mad as a March hare

■ Completely eccentric or unpredictable.

"His erratic behaviour left colleagues wondering if he was as mad as a March hare."

SET 8 · Idioms 71–80

71. As neat as a pin

■ Extremely tidy.

"Despite the chaos around her, her desk was always as neat as a pin."

72. As old as the hills

■ Of very great age.

"The tradition was as old as the hills."

73. As plain as a pikestaff

■ Perfectly obvious and unmistakable.

"The solution, in retrospect, was as plain as a pikestaff."

74. As plain as day

■ Completely obvious and impossible to misunderstand.

"The error in reasoning was as plain as day to any careful reader."

75. As the case may be

■ Depending on which of two or more possibilities applies.

"The report may be praised or censured, as the case may be."

76. As the crow flies

■ In a straight line between two points.

"The villages are only five miles apart as the crow flies."

77. As thick as thieves

■ On extremely close and secretive terms.

"The two ministers had been as thick as thieves since their student days."

78. As things stand

■ Given the present state of affairs.

"As things stand, the proposal cannot be approved."

79. Assert one's authority

■ To make clear and enforce one's power or position.

"The new chair moved quickly to assert her authority."

80. At a crossroads

■ At a point where a decisive choice must be made.

"The organisation stood at a crossroads regarding its future direction."

SET 9 · Idioms 81–90

81. At a glance

- Immediately; without detailed study.
"Even at a glance, the errors in the argument were apparent."

82. At a loose end

- Having nothing to do; unoccupied.
"After retiring, he found himself curiously at a loose end."

83. At a loss

- Puzzled or uncertain what to do or say.
"The chairman was at a loss to explain the discrepancy."

84. At a moment's notice

- With very little or no advance warning.
"She was expected to be available at a moment's notice."

85. At a premium

- Scarce and therefore in high demand.
"Good office space in the capital was at a premium."

86. At a safe distance

- Far enough away to be unaffected by something dangerous.
"Observers watched the proceedings at a safe distance."

87. At a stone's throw

- Very close in distance.
"The two institutions were barely at a stone's throw from each other."

88. At a stretch

- Continuously, without stopping; or at the most.
"He could work for eight hours at a stretch without fatigue."

89. At any cost

- Regardless of the sacrifice required.
"The leadership was determined to succeed at any cost."

90. At cross purposes

- With mutually incompatible aims.
"The departments had been working at cross purposes for months."

SET 10 · Idioms 91–100

91. At daggers drawn

- In a state of open and bitter hostility.
"The two factions had been at daggers drawn since the dispute."

92. At every turn

- At each new stage; constantly.
"At every turn, they encountered fresh obstacles."

93. At face value

- Accepting something as it appears, without deeper scrutiny.
"One should not take every political promise at face value."

94. At full pelt

- At top speed.
"The investigation team set off at full pelt."

95. At full tilt

- At maximum speed or with maximum effort.
"The factory was running at full tilt to meet the deadline."

96. At great pains to

- Taking extraordinary care to do something.
"He was at great pains to make his position absolutely clear."

97. At heart

- In one's fundamental nature or innermost feelings.
"He was, at heart, a man of conviction."

98. At loggerheads

- In strong and persistent disagreement.
"The two parties remained at loggerheads over the budget."

99. At loggerheads over

- In a state of strong disagreement or conflict about something.
"The two departments were at loggerheads over the allocation of resources."

100. At loggerheads with

- In a state of strong and persistent disagreement with someone.
"The two committee chairs were at loggerheads with each other throughout."

SET 11 · Idioms 101–110

101. At odds with

- In conflict or disagreement with.
"The findings were entirely at odds with the official position."

102. At one fell swoop

- With a single decisive action.
"The legislation abolished all the exemptions at one fell swoop."

103. At one's beck and call

- Always ready to respond to another's wishes.
"The staff were expected to be at the director's beck and call."

104. At one's disposal

- Available for one to use freely.
"All necessary resources were placed at the team's disposal."

105. At one's fingertips

- Immediately and easily accessible.
"With the database available, all necessary information was at her fingertips."

106. At one's wits' end

- In a state of complete desperation.
"After weeks of fruitless effort, the team was at its wits' end."

107. At pains to

- Extremely careful or anxious to do something well.
"He was at pains to be scrupulously fair to both sides."

108. At sixes and sevens

- In a state of confusion or disarray.
"Without the project manager, the team was at sixes and sevens."

109. At someone's throat

- Engaged in fierce argument or hostility with someone.
"The two factions were at each other's throats throughout the conference."

110. At stake

- At risk; in question.
"The reputation of the entire institution was at stake."

SET 12 · Idioms 111–120

111. At the behest

- At the command or request of someone.
"The amendment was introduced at the behest of the largest stakeholder."

112. At the behest of

- At the instruction or request of.
"The report was commissioned at the behest of the committee."

113. At the coalface

- In the most difficult, practical aspect of an activity.
"Those at the coalface knew the policy was unworkable."

114. At the cutting edge

- At the forefront of development or innovation.
"The laboratory remained at the cutting edge of genomic research."

115. At the drop of a hat

- Immediately and without hesitation.
"He was prepared to travel at the drop of a hat."

116. At the eleventh hour

- At the last possible moment before a deadline.
"An agreement was reached at the eleventh hour."

117. At the expense of

- To the detriment of something or someone.
"Efficiency was achieved at the expense of quality."

118. At the expense of truth

- In a way that sacrifices accuracy for some other purpose.
"The narrative was constructed at the expense of truth."

119. At the forefront of

- In the leading position.
"The institution had been at the forefront of research for decades."

120. At the heart of

- Being the most essential element of.
"At the heart of the argument was a fundamental disagreement about values."

SET 13 · Idioms 121–130

121. At the helm

■ In command or control.

"With an experienced statesman at the helm, stability returned."

122. At the mercy of

■ Completely subject to the will or power of another.

"The small nation was at the mercy of its more powerful neighbour."

123. At the outset

■ At the beginning.

"At the very outset, the objectives should have been clearly defined."

124. At the root of

■ Being the fundamental cause of something.

"At the root of the problem was a misalignment of incentives."

125. At variance with

■ In conflict or disagreement with.

"His testimony was at variance with the documentary evidence."

126. Back and forth

■ Moving in one direction and then another; repeatedly going between two positions.

"Negotiations moved back and forth for weeks without conclusion."

127. Back in the day

■ In the past; in earlier times.

"Back in the day, such proceedings were conducted entirely in private."

128. Back of the envelope

■ Quickly and roughly estimated.

"The back-of-the-envelope calculation suggested the figure was plausible."

129. Back one into a corner

■ To leave someone with no viable options.

"His line of questioning backed the witness into a corner."

130. Back the wrong horse

■ To support someone or something unlikely to succeed.

"By endorsing the flawed candidate, he had backed the wrong horse."

SET 14 · Idioms 131–140

131. Back to basics

■ A return to fundamental principles.

"The new curriculum represented a return back to basics in education."

132. Back to square one

■ Returning to the starting point after failure.

"When funding collapsed, the project was sent back to square one."

133. Backtrack on

■ To withdraw from a previously stated position.

"The administration was forced to backtrack on its earlier commitment."

134. Bad blood

■ Ill feeling or hostility between people.

"Bad blood between the two departments had festered for years."

135. Bag and baggage

■ With all one's possessions; completely.

"He was dismissed bag and baggage from the firm."

136. Balance competing interests

■ To reconcile the different demands of opposing parties.

"Good governance requires the ability to balance competing interests."

137. Balance of probabilities

■ The standard of proof in civil proceedings; what is more likely than not.

"On the balance of probabilities, the account was found credible."

138. Balance the books

■ To ensure income and expenditure are equal.

"The treasurer was under pressure to balance the books by year end."

139. The ball is in one's court

■ It is now one's responsibility to take the next action.

"Following the proposal, the ball was firmly in the government's court."

140. The ball rolling

■ The process already started and in motion.

"Once the ball was rolling, it proved difficult to stop."

SET 15 · Idioms 141–150

141. A baptism of fire

■ A difficult first experience of something.
"His maiden speech in parliament was a genuine baptism of fire."

142. Bark louder than one's bite

■ To seem more threatening than one actually is.
"The regulator's bark proved considerably louder than its bite."

143. Bark up the wrong tree

■ To pursue a mistaken course or make a wrong accusation.
"If you suspect him of misconduct, you are barking up the wrong tree."

144. Bask in reflected glory

■ To enjoy praise or admiration that belongs to someone else.
"His team was content to bask in the reflected glory of his achievement."

145. Be a credit to

■ To reflect well upon someone or something through one's conduct.
"She was a credit to the institution she represented."

146. Be all things to all people

■ To attempt to please everyone, often failing as a result.
"No policy can be all things to all people."

147. Be in the ascendant

■ To be increasing in power, influence, or popularity.
"The more radical wing of the movement was clearly in the ascendant."

148. Be in the vanguard

■ To be among the leaders of a movement or development.
"The university had long been in the vanguard of scientific discovery."

149. Be master of one's fate

■ To have control over the direction of one's own life.
"He was determined to be master of his own fate."

150. Be of one mind

■ To be in complete agreement.
"The committee was of one mind on the need for urgent reform."

SET 16 · Idioms 151–160

151. Be open to question

■ To be subject to doubt or debate.
"Whether the evidence was sufficient was open to question."

152. Bear examination

■ To withstand scrutiny without being found wanting.
"The argument barely bore sustained examination."

153. Bear fruit

■ To produce a useful result.
"Years of patient negotiation finally bore fruit."

154. Bear in mind

■ To remember or take into account.
"One should bear in mind the broader context."

155. Bear out

■ To confirm or support a claim.
"The subsequent evidence bore out her original contention."

156. Bear testimony to

■ To provide evidence of; to demonstrate.
"The archive bears eloquent testimony to the richness of the period."

157. Bear the brunt of

■ To suffer the most severe part of something unpleasant.
"The coastal communities bore the full brunt of the storm."

158. Bear the cross

■ To endure a heavy burden or responsibility.
"She bore the cross of her family's debts without complaint."

159. Bear the hallmarks of

■ To show the characteristic features of something.
"The document bore all the hallmarks of a hastily drafted compromise."

160. Bear witness to

■ To observe directly; to provide evidence.
"The documents bore witness to systematic irregularities."

SET 17 · Idioms 161–170

161. Beard the lion in his den

■ To confront someone powerful boldly in their own territory.

"She bearded the lion in his den by challenging the chairman directly."

162. Beat a retreat

■ To withdraw from a difficult situation.

"Faced with overwhelming opposition, the minister beat a hasty retreat."

163. Beat about the bush

■ To approach a subject in an indirect or evasive manner.

"He beat about the bush for several minutes before admitting the truth."

164. Beat one's breast

■ To display exaggerated or theatrical remorse or distress.

"There is little value in beating one's breast over decisions already made."

165. Beat someone black and blue

■ To hit someone repeatedly, causing bruises.

"The account described how the prisoner had been beaten black and blue."

166. Beat someone hollow

■ To defeat someone completely.

"The visiting team was beaten hollow in every category."

167. Beaten at the post

■ Defeated or surpassed at the very last moment.

"Despite leading throughout, she was beaten at the post."

168. Become a byword for

■ To serve as a well-known example of a particular quality.

"The institution had become a byword for administrative efficiency."

169. Bed and breakfast

■ Providing overnight lodging and morning meal.

"The modest bed and breakfast was their base for a week."

170. A bed of roses

■ An easy or comfortable situation.

"The academic life is by no means always the bed of roses it appears."

SET 18 · Idioms 171–180

171. Beg to differ

■ To politely but firmly disagree.

"With the greatest respect, I beg to differ on that particular point."

172. Behind closed doors

■ In private, away from public scrutiny.

"The real negotiations were conducted entirely behind closed doors."

173. Behind the curve

■ Failing to keep pace with current developments.

"The institution was criticised for being consistently behind the curve."

174. Behind the scenes

■ Away from public view; in a covert capacity.

"Much of the real work was done behind the scenes."

175. Believe it or not

■ Used to introduce a surprising or counterintuitive statement.

"Believe it or not, the simplest solution had been overlooked."

176. Below par

■ Below the expected or required standard.

"Her performance in the final round was distinctly below par."

177. Below the belt

■ Unfair; contrary to accepted rules.

"The personal attack on his family was decidedly below the belt."

178. Belt and braces

■ Extra precautions for safety.

"The redundant systems provided belt-and-braces security."

179. Bend over backwards

■ To make every possible effort to accommodate.

"The team bent over backwards to satisfy every client requirement."

180. Bend the rules

■ To apply rules flexibly to suit circumstances.

"There was considerable pressure to bend the rules for the favoured contractor."

SET 19 · Idioms 181–190

181. Bend to one's will

- To compel someone to submit to one's wishes.
"He had no intention of bending to external pressure."

182. The benefit of experience

- The advantage gained from previous encounters.
"With the benefit of experience, the team handled the crisis expertly."

183. Beside the mark

- Irrelevant or inaccurate; missing the point.
"His lengthy rebuttal was entirely beside the mark."

184. Better late than never

- It is preferable to do something late than not at all.
"The apology was overdue, but better late than never."

185. Between a rock and a hard place

- Faced with two equally difficult options.
"The treasurer found himself between a rock and a hard place."

186. Between the devil and the deep blue sea

- Caught between two equally unpleasant choices.
"The diplomat was between the devil and the deep blue sea."

187. Between the lines

- In what is implied rather than explicitly stated.
"Reading between the lines, the report was deeply critical of the management."

188. Between two fires

- Under attack from two opposing sides simultaneously.
"The judge found herself between two fires as both parties exerted pressure."

189. Between wind and water

- In a vulnerable or exposed position.
"His financial affairs were dangerously between wind and water."

190. Beyond cavil

- Without any reasonable basis for objection.
"The evidence was, beyond cavil, sufficient to establish the case."

SET 20 · Idioms 191–200

191. Beyond measure

- To an extremely great or immeasurable degree.
"The contribution of the founding members was valued beyond measure."

192. Beyond one's ken

- Outside one's range of knowledge or understanding.
"The intricacies of quantum mechanics were beyond his ken."

193. Beyond one's means

- More expensive or demanding than one can afford.
"The proposed expansion was clearly beyond the organisation's means."

194. Beyond question

- Unquestionably true or correct.
"Her integrity was beyond question."

195. Beyond the pale

- Outside the bounds of acceptable behaviour.
"Such conduct was widely regarded as beyond the pale."

196. Beyond the shadow of a doubt

- With absolute certainty.
"His guilt was established beyond the shadow of a doubt."

197. The bigger they are, the harder they fall

- The more powerful a person, the more dramatic their eventual downfall.
"He had always believed that the bigger they are, the harder they fall."

198. A bird's-eye view

- A general or overall view from above.
"From the tower they had a bird's-eye view of the entire city."

199. Birds of a feather flock together

- People of similar character associate together.
"Their alliance was unsurprising — birds of a feather flock together."

200. Bite off more than one can chew

- To undertake more than one can manage.
"By accepting three commissions simultaneously, he bit off more than he could chew."

SET 21 · Idioms 201–210

201. Bite one's tongue

■ To refrain from saying something one wishes to say.
"She bit her tongue throughout the meeting rather than start an argument."

202. Bite the bullet

■ To endure a difficult situation with courage and stoicism.
"There was no alternative but to bite the bullet."

203. Bite the dust

■ To fail, be defeated, or die.
"Another ambitious initiative bit the dust in committee."

204. Bite the hand that feeds one

■ To harm or show ingratitude to one's benefactor.
"Criticising the sponsor was biting the hand that fed them."

205. Black and white

■ Clearly and unambiguously defined; in writing.
"The terms were laid out in black and white in the contract."

206. Black sheep

■ A person who is a disgrace to a group or family.
"He was regarded as the black sheep of the academic family."

207. Blaze a trail

■ To be a pioneer; to open up a new path for others to follow.
"The research team blazed a trail that others subsequently followed."

208. A blessing in disguise

■ Something bad at first that results in something good.
"Losing that post was a blessing in disguise; it led to a far better career."

209. A blind alley

■ A course of action that leads nowhere.
"The investigation turned into a complete blind alley."

210. Blind eye

■ Deliberate failure to acknowledge something one knows to be wrong.
"The regulators had turned a blind eye to the practice for years."

SET 22 · Idioms 211–220

211. Blood, sweat, and tears

■ Enormous effort and sacrifice made to achieve something.
"The project demanded blood, sweat, and tears from every member of the team."

212. Blot one's copybook

■ To damage one's reputation by a foolish mistake.
"A single indiscretion blotted his otherwise impeccable copybook."

213. Blow a hole in

■ To cause serious damage to or weaken something.
"The new evidence blew a hole in the prosecution's case."

214. Blow hot and cold

■ To alternate between enthusiasm and indifference.
"His investors grew impatient with his habit of blowing hot and cold."

215. Blow one's own trumpet

■ To boast about one's own achievements.
"He never lost an opportunity to blow his own trumpet."

216. Blow the whistle on

■ To report wrongdoing or illegal activity to the appropriate authority.
"An anonymous source blew the whistle on the corrupt procurement process."

217. Bode ill

■ To be an unfavourable sign of what is to come.
"The early results boded ill for the rest of the campaign."

218. Bode well

■ To be a favourable omen for the future.
"The early signs boded well for a successful outcome."

219. A bolt from the blue

■ A sudden, completely unexpected event.
"The resignation of the chairman came as a bolt from the blue."

220. A bolt upright

■ Sitting or standing perfectly straight, especially with sudden alertness.
"She sat bolt upright when the announcement was made."

SET 23 · Idioms 221–230

221. A bone of contention

■ A subject causing persistent disagreement.
"The disputed clause remained a bone of contention throughout the talks."

222. The boot is on the other foot

■ The situation is now exactly the reverse of what it was.
"With the evidence overturned, the boot was firmly on the other foot."

223. Born with a silver spoon in one's mouth

■ Born into wealth and privilege.
"He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and never knew hardship."

224. The bottom line

■ The most fundamental truth or consideration.
"The bottom line was that the project was unsustainable."

225. Bread and butter

■ One's main source of income or livelihood.
"Tourism was the bread and butter of the regional economy."

226. Break new ground

■ To do something innovative or pioneering.
"The research broke entirely new ground in neuroscience."

227. Break one's stride

■ To interrupt the smooth progress of one's work or advance.
"Nothing seemed to break his stride once he had committed to the task."

228. Break one's word

■ To fail to keep a promise.
"A leader who breaks their word loses the trust of followers."

229. Break ranks

■ To fail to maintain solidarity with a group.
"Several MPs broke ranks and voted against the government."

230. Break the back of

■ To complete the hardest or largest part of a task.
"By the end of the first week, they had broken the back of the project."

SET 24 · Idioms 231–240

231. Break the deadlock

■ To resolve an impasse.
"A new proposal finally broke the deadlock in negotiations."

232. Break the ice

■ To initiate conversation; to ease tension in a social situation.
"His opening anecdote helped break the ice at the formal reception."

233. Break the mould

■ To do something in an entirely new way.
"The novel broke the mould of conventional detective fiction."

234. Break with tradition

■ To depart from established practice.
"The appointment marked a clear break with tradition."

235. Breathe new life into

■ To revitalise something that had become stagnant.
"The new director breathed new life into the ailing institution."

236. A bridge too far

■ An ambition or action too extreme to succeed.
"Attempting a hostile takeover of that size proved a bridge too far."

237. Bring a matter to a close

■ To reach a conclusion and end a process.
"The chairman sought to bring the matter to a close."

238. Bring about

■ To cause something to happen.
"The reforms brought about a fundamental change in the culture."

239. Bring home the bacon

■ To earn money to support one's household.
"He worked long hours to bring home the bacon."

240. Bring home to someone

■ To make someone fully understand the significance of something.
"The documentary brought home to its audience the scale of the problem."

SET 25 · Idioms 241–250

241. Bring in from the cold

■ To allow someone who has been excluded to rejoin a group.

"After years of isolation, the dissident scholar was finally brought in from the cold."

242. Bring into question

■ To cast doubt upon.

"The irregularities brought the entire process into question."

243. Bring into relief

■ To make something clearly visible or prominent by contrast.

"The comparison brought the disparities into sharp relief."

244. Bring matters to a head

■ To force a situation into a crisis that must be resolved.

"The disclosure brought matters to a head."

245. Bring to a head

■ To cause a situation to reach a decisive point.

"The latest episode brought the tensions to a head."

246. Bring to a standstill

■ To cause something to stop moving or functioning completely.

"The industrial action brought the production line to a complete standstill."

247. Bring to account

■ To require someone to explain or answer for their actions.

"The committee was determined to bring those responsible to account."

248. Bring to bear

■ To apply pressure, skill, or resources to a task.

"She brought considerable experience to bear on the problem."

249. Bring to book

■ To punish or call to account.

"The offenders were eventually brought to book."

250. Bring to light

■ To reveal or disclose something previously unknown.

"The investigation brought to light evidence of systematic fraud."

SET 26 · Idioms 251–260

251. Bring to the fore

■ To make something prominent or important.

"The crisis brought to the fore questions of national security."

252. Broaden one's horizons

■ To extend the range of one's experience and knowledge.

"The fellowship was designed to help young scholars broaden their horizons."

253. Brook no argument

■ To refuse to tolerate any disagreement or dissent.

"On this point, the director brooked no argument whatsoever."

254. Brook no opposition

■ To tolerate no dissent or challenge.

"On this matter, the director brooked no opposition."

255. The buck stops here

■ One accepts final responsibility and cannot pass it to anyone else.

"As director, the buck stopped with her."

256. Build bridges

■ To promote understanding and cooperation between parties.

"The ambassador worked tirelessly to build bridges between the two nations."

257. Build castles in the air

■ To indulge in unrealistic plans or daydreams.

"He spent his youth building castles in the air."

258. Build up a head of steam

■ To gather momentum or intensity.

"Opposition to the proposal was building up a considerable head of steam."

259. Built on sand

■ Based on a weak or unreliable foundation.

"The entire argument was built on sand."

260. A bull in a china shop

■ A clumsy, tactless person in a delicate situation.

"He handled the sensitive negotiation like a bull in a china shop."

SET 27 · Idioms 261–270

261. Burn one's boats

■ To commit oneself irrevocably to a course of action.
"By resigning publicly, she burned her boats and left no room for return."

262. Burn one's bridges

■ To permanently damage a relationship through hostile actions.
"He burned his bridges with the publishing industry after the controversy."

263. Burn one's fingers

■ To suffer from a bad experience, often due to taking a risk.
"He burned his fingers badly in his first investment."

264. Burn the candle at both ends

■ To exhaust oneself by overworking and sleeping too little.
"She burned the candle at both ends throughout the examination period."

265. Burn the midnight oil

■ To work very late into the night.
"The research team burned the midnight oil to complete the report."

266. Bury one's head in the sand

■ To refuse to acknowledge an obvious problem.
"Management chose to bury their heads in the sand rather than address the crisis."

267. Bury the hatchet

■ To settle a dispute and make peace.
"After years of rivalry, the two scholars finally buried the hatchet."

268. A busy bee

■ A very active and hardworking person.
"She was a busy bee, always the last to leave the office."

269. By a long chalk

■ By a great margin; by far.
"She was, by a long chalk, the most accomplished administrator."

270. By all accounts

■ According to every report or opinion.
"By all accounts, the inauguration was a considerable success."

SET 28 · Idioms 271–280

271. By and large

■ On the whole; in general.
"By and large, the review panel found the research to be of high quality."

272. By common consent

■ With general agreement.
"He was, by common consent, the most distinguished scholar of his generation."

273. By definition

■ As a consequence of the meaning of the words used; inevitably.
"A truly democratic process is, by definition, subject to public scrutiny."

274. By design

■ Intentionally; as part of a deliberate plan.
"The ambiguity of the clause appeared to be by design rather than accident."

275. By dint of

■ By means of; through the application of.
"She succeeded by dint of sheer hard work and determination."

276. By fits and starts

■ With irregular bursts of activity; intermittently.
"Progress on the manuscript proceeded by fits and starts."

277. By hook or by crook

■ By whatever means necessary, fair or unfair.
"He was determined to obtain the document by hook or by crook."

278. By implication

■ Without stating something directly; by what is inferred.
"His silence indicated, by implication, that he agreed with the assessment."

279. By leaps and bounds

■ Rapidly and by significant degrees.
"Her command of the language improved by leaps and bounds."

280. By one's own admission

■ According to one's own statements.
"By his own admission, the director had been aware of the irregularities."

SET 29 · Idioms 281–290

281. By the book

■ Strictly according to the rules and established procedure.

"The auditors insisted that everything be done strictly by the book."

282. By the numbers

■ In a routine, mechanical manner, without originality.

"The performance was competent but entirely by the numbers."

283. By the same token

■ In the same way; for the same reason.

"He would not tolerate dishonesty and, by the same token, expected loyalty."

284. By the skin of one's teeth

■ Only just; by the narrowest of margins.

"He passed the examination by the skin of his teeth."

285. By the sweat of one's brow

■ Through one's own hard work and effort.

"Everything she possessed had been earned by the sweat of her brow."

286. By word of mouth

■ Through spoken rather than written communication.

"News of the discovery spread by word of mouth."

287. A calculated risk

■ A risk taken after careful consideration of the likely outcome.

"Investing in the new market was a calculated risk the board was prepared to take."

288. Call a moratorium on

■ To declare an official suspension of an activity.

"The organisation called a moratorium on new admissions pending the review."

289. Call a spade a spade

■ To speak plainly and frankly.

"He was never one to mince words; he called a spade a spade."

290. Call into question

■ To cast doubt upon something.

"The new evidence called into question the validity of the original verdict."

SET 30 · Idioms 291–300

291. Call the shots

■ To be in a position of authority and control.

"It was clear from the outset who was calling the shots."

292. Call the tune

■ To determine what happens; to be in charge.

"The principal shareholders called the tune at every board meeting."

293. The calm before the storm

■ A quiet period before trouble begins.

"The unexpected lull in debate was merely the calm before the storm."

294. Can't see the wood for the trees

■ Unable to understand the overall situation because of excessive attention to detail.

"The committee couldn't see the wood for the trees in its focus on procedure."

295. Carry a torch for

■ To have a longstanding and often unrequited admiration or love for someone.

"It was widely suspected that he had carried a torch for her for many years."

296. Carry all before one

■ To overcome all opposition and succeed completely.

"In her first year as director, she carried all before her."

297. Carry coals to Newcastle

■ To do something superfluous or unnecessary.

"Offering further proof to such an expert was to carry coals to Newcastle."

298. Carry conviction

■ To be believable or persuasive.

"His explanation carried little conviction with the investigators."

299. Carry the burden of proof

■ To have the obligation to prove one's case.

"In civil proceedings, the claimant carries the burden of proof."

300. Carry the can

■ To take the blame or responsibility for something, often on behalf of others.

"As department head, she had to carry the can for the team's failure."

SET 31 · Idioms 301–310

301. Carry the day

■ To succeed or prevail.

"The eloquence of her closing argument carried the day."

302. Carry weight

■ To have influence or importance.

"His opinion carries considerable weight in academic circles."

303. Carve in stone

■ To be fixed and unalterable.

"The decision is not yet carved in stone and may be revisited."

304. Cast a long shadow

■ To exert a significant, often negative, influence.

"The events of that year continued to cast a long shadow over his career."

305. Cast a shadow over

■ To have a negative effect on; to make something less enjoyable.

"The disclosure cast a long shadow over the proceedings."

306. Cast a wide net

■ To include a broad range of people, ideas, or approaches.

"The recruitment drive cast a wide net to ensure diversity of candidates."

307. Cast aspersions on

■ To make disparaging remarks about someone.

"He was careful not to cast aspersions on his predecessor's record."

308. Cast doubt on

■ To raise questions about the validity of something.

"The findings cast serious doubt on the accepted interpretation."

309. Cast in a different mould

■ Of a fundamentally different character or type.

"His successor was cast in a very different mould."

310. Cast one's mind back

■ To try to remember something from the past.

"He cast his mind back to the first committee meeting."

SET 32 · Idioms 311–320

311. Cast pearls before swine

■ To offer something valuable to those who cannot appreciate it.

"Delivering a subtle literary lecture to that audience was casting pearls before swine."

312. Cast the die

■ To make an irrevocable decision.

"When he submitted the manuscript, the die was cast."

313. Cast to the winds

■ To disregard or abandon something completely.

"All caution was cast to the winds."

314. The cat is out of the bag

■ A secret has been revealed.

"An indiscreet remark meant the cat was fully out of the bag."

315. Catch at a straw

■ To try anything to improve a hopeless situation.

"In desperation, the defence began to catch at straws."

316. Catch in the act

■ To discover someone while they are doing something wrong.

"The journalist caught the official in the act of accepting a bribe."

317. Catch one's eye

■ To attract someone's attention.

"The unusual painting caught the critic's eye immediately."

318. Catch red-handed

■ To apprehend someone in the act of wrongdoing.

"The auditors caught the accountant red-handed manipulating the figures."

319. Caught between two stools

■ Failing to achieve either of two alternatives.

"His attempt to please both factions left him caught between two stools."

320. Caught in the crossfire

■ Accidentally involved in a dispute between others.

"The neutral country found itself caught in the crossfire of the trade war."

SET 33 · Idioms 321–330

321. Cause a furore

■ To create a great deal of excitement, anger, or controversy.

"The publication caused a considerable furore in political circles."

322. Cause to give pause

■ To make someone stop and think carefully.

"The unexpected findings gave the committee considerable pause."

323. Cease and desist

■ To stop an activity immediately and refrain from it in the future.

"The lawyers issued a formal notice to cease and desist."

324. Cease to be relevant

■ To no longer apply or matter in a given context.

"The old framework had effectively ceased to be relevant."

325. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link

■ A group's strength is limited by its most vulnerable member.

"The team failed because a chain is only as strong as its weakest link."

326. Challenge received wisdom

■ To question ideas that are widely and uncritically accepted.

"Good scholarship requires the willingness to challenge received wisdom."

327. Champ at the bit

■ To show impatience to begin something.

"The researchers were champing at the bit to publish their findings."

328. Champion a cause

■ To actively support and promote a principle or objective.

"She had championed the cause of press freedom throughout her career."

329. A change of heart

■ A reversal of one's opinion or intention.

"After reflection, she had a complete change of heart about the proposal."

330. Change one's tune

■ To change one's opinion or attitude markedly.

"When the evidence emerged, he quickly changed his tune."

SET 34 · Idioms 331–340

331. Change tack

■ To alter one's approach or course of action.

"When the first strategy failed, the team changed tack."

332. Change the calculus

■ To alter the factors that determine a decision or outcome.

"The new evidence changed the calculus entirely."

333. Chart new territory

■ To explore areas or ideas previously unknown or unexamined.

"The research was charting new territory in the field."

334. Chase one's own tail

■ To waste time in futile activity.

"Without a clear strategy, the committee was simply chasing its own tail."

335. Chase rainbows

■ To pursue unrealistic goals.

"The policy amounted to chasing rainbows."

336. Check the pulse of

■ To assess the mood or condition of a group or organisation.

"The survey was designed to check the pulse of public opinion."

337. A chip off the old block

■ A person closely resembling a parent in character.

"His son was a remarkable chip off the old block."

338. Cite chapter and verse

■ To provide precise and detailed authority for a claim.

"He could cite chapter and verse for every assertion he made."

339. Claim the high ground

■ To occupy a position of moral or strategic superiority.

"The opposition sought to claim the moral high ground in the debate."

340. Cleanse the Augean stables

■ To undertake a massive long-overdue process of reform.

"The new administration pledged to cleanse the Augean stables."

SET 35 · Idioms 341–350

341. Clear the air

■ To resolve a misunderstanding or dispel tension.
"The meeting was arranged specifically to clear the air."

342. Clear the decks

■ To remove obstacles and prepare for action.
"Before the new initiative could begin, it was necessary to clear the decks."

343. A close call

■ A narrow escape from danger or disaster.
"The car skidded on the ice — that was a very close call."

344. Close one's eyes to

■ To deliberately ignore something.
"The management had closed its eyes to the irregularities for too long."

345. Close ranks

■ To unite in defence against a common threat.
"The party closed ranks in the face of the scandal."

346. Close shave

■ A narrow escape from danger.
"The car narrowly missed the pedestrian — a very close shave indeed."

347. Close the book on

■ To treat something as finished and not open for further discussion.
"The committee closed the book on the matter after the final report."

348. Close to the bone

■ Uncomfortably close to the truth; likely to cause offence.
"His remarks were considered rather close to the bone by some members."

349. Cloud one's judgement

■ To impair one's ability to think clearly and objectively.
"Personal animosity was clearly clouding his judgement on the matter."

350. Coast is clear

■ There is no danger of being observed or caught.
"Once the supervisor had departed, the coast was clear."

SET 36 · Idioms 351–360

351. A cock-and-bull story

■ An implausible fabricated tale.
"He offered the committee the most elaborate cock-and-bull story."

352. Come a cropper

■ To suffer a sudden failure or misfortune.
"After a string of overconfident decisions, the company came a cropper."

353. Come apart at the seams

■ To begin to fail or disintegrate.
"Without strong leadership, the project began to come apart at the seams."

354. Come back to haunt one

■ For past mistakes or actions to cause problems in the future.
"His early public statements came back to haunt him during the inquiry."

355. Come clean

■ To confess; to disclose the truth.
"Investigators urged the suspect to come clean."

356. Come down the pike

■ To appear or arrive on the horizon; to emerge as a new development.
"Several significant changes were coming down the pike."

357. Come full circle

■ To return to the original position or starting point.
"The debate had come full circle, returning to the original proposal."

358. Come hell or high water

■ Regardless of the difficulties encountered.
"She was determined to complete the project, come hell or high water."

359. Come home to roost

■ For negative consequences to affect the person responsible.
"His earlier deceptions finally came home to roost."

360. Come into one's own

■ To fully realise one's potential.
"She came into her own as a leader during the crisis."

SET 37 · Idioms 361–370

361. Come of age

■ To reach maturity; to gain full recognition.
"The discipline had truly come of age as a field of study."

362. Come out in the wash

■ To be resolved satisfactorily in due course.
"The director assured the board that the complications would come out in the wash."

363. Come out swinging

■ To begin aggressively and with full force.
"The new chair came out swinging at her first press conference."

364. Come to a head

■ To reach a critical or decisive point.
"The dispute finally came to a head at the annual general meeting."

365. Come to a standstill

■ To stop completely; to cease all progress.
"Talks came to a complete standstill over the disputed clause."

366. Come to grief

■ To meet with failure or misfortune.
"The ambitious expansion plan came to grief due to poor planning."

367. Come to grips with

■ To begin to deal with something difficult seriously.
"It took him time to come to grips with the scale of the problem."

368. Come to light

■ To be revealed or become known.
"Further irregularities came to light during the extended audit."

369. Come to nothing

■ To end without producing any useful result.
"Years of negotiation came to nothing."

370. Come to pass

■ To occur; to happen.
"The scenario he had forecast did indeed come to pass."

SET 38 · Idioms 371–380

371. Come to terms with

■ To accept a difficult or unpleasant situation.
"She struggled to come to terms with the scale of her loss."

372. Come under fire

■ To be subjected to strong criticism or attack.
"The policy came under sustained fire from opposition members."

373. Come under scrutiny

■ To be subjected to close and critical examination.
"Every aspect of the accounts came under intense scrutiny."

374. Come what may

■ Regardless of whatever happens.
"He was resolved to defend his position, come what may."

375. Command respect

■ To inspire or earn the respect of others through one's conduct.
"His quiet authority commanded the respect of all who knew him."

376. Command the field

■ To be the dominant and most authoritative figure in a subject.
"For two decades, she had commanded the field of international arbitration."

377. Common ground

■ Shared interests, beliefs, or premises.
"The mediator sought to identify common ground between the parties."

378. Compel the conclusion

■ To make a particular conclusion unavoidable.
"The accumulation of evidence compelled the conclusion that the claims were false."

379. Compound the problem

■ To make an existing problem significantly worse.
"The delay only compounded the problem."

380. Compromise one's position

■ To damage or weaken one's standing through one's actions.
"Accepting such a gift would compromise her position entirely."

SET 39 · Idioms 381–390

381. Concede the argument

■ To acknowledge that an opposing argument is correct.
"He conceded the argument with admirable intellectual honesty."

382. Concede the floor

■ To yield one's speaking time to another person.
"He graciously conceded the floor to his colleague."

383. Conduct a rearguard action

■ To fight defensively to slow a losing battle.
"The traditionalists conducted a determined rearguard action against reform."

384. Confer a distinction

■ To bestow an honour or award.
"The university conferred its highest distinction on the retiring professor."

385. Confound expectations

■ To produce a result that defies what was anticipated.
"The outcome confounded the expectations of virtually every observer."

386. Contain the damage

■ To limit the harmful consequences of an event.
"Swift action was taken to contain the damage to the institution's reputation."

387. Contend with

■ To have to deal with a difficulty.
"The department had to contend with severely reduced resources."

388. Continue to hold sway

■ To remain in a dominant or influential position.
"Traditional methods continued to hold sway in the profession."

389. Contribute to the discourse

■ To add something meaningful to the ongoing public or academic discussion.
"The publication made a significant contribution to the scholarly discourse."

390. Cook one's goose

■ To ruin one's own prospects or position.
"By falsifying the report, he effectively cooked his own goose."

SET 40 · Idioms 391–400

391. Cook the books

■ To falsify financial records for fraudulent purposes.
"The auditors found evidence that the accounts had been systematically cooked."

392. Corner the market

■ To gain control of virtually the entire supply of a commodity or service.
"The firm had effectively cornered the market in high-frequency trading."

393. Cost an arm and a leg

■ To be extremely expensive.
"The restoration of the ancient building cost an arm and a leg."

394. Cost dearly

■ To entail a high price, whether financial or otherwise.
"His impetuous decision cost the company dearly."

395. A counsel of despair

■ Advice that is defeatist and offers no constructive solution.
"His suggestion that nothing could be done was dismissed as a counsel of despair."

396. Counsel of perfection

■ Advice that is ideal but impractical.
"His proposals, though admirable, amounted to a counsel of perfection."

397. Court disaster

■ To act in a way very likely to cause catastrophe.
"Proceeding without proper legal counsel was courting disaster."

398. Court public opinion

■ To seek to influence and win over the general public.
"The campaign was carefully designed to court public opinion."

399. Cover one's tracks

■ To conceal evidence of one's actions or movements.
"The attempt to cover his tracks only deepened suspicion."

400. The crack of dawn

■ Very early in the morning.
"The team assembled at the crack of dawn."

SET 41 · Idioms 401–410

401. Crack under pressure

- To fail to cope when subjected to intense demands.
"He was known for not cracking under pressure."

402. A crocodile's tears

- Insincere expressions of sorrow.
"His public apology was dismissed as crocodile's tears."

403. Cross a line

- To transgress an important moral or ethical boundary.
"His remark crossed a line that few in the audience were prepared to overlook."

404. Cross one's fingers

- To hope for good luck.
"She crossed her fingers and submitted the application."

405. Cross swords

- To have an argument or dispute.
"The two scholars had crossed swords in print on numerous occasions."

406. Cross swords with

- To have a disagreement or conflict with someone.
"She had crossed swords with the board on numerous occasions."

407. Cross the Rubicon

- To make an irreversible decision that commits one to a course of action.
"By making the announcement, the minister had crossed the Rubicon."

408. Crown with success

- To complete or conclude something with a successful outcome.
"Years of arduous research were finally crowned with success."

409. The crux of the matter

- The most essential or decisive point.
"The crux of the matter was whether the evidence was admissible."

410. A cry in the wilderness

- A warning or appeal that is ignored.
"His early warnings about the crisis proved a cry in the wilderness."

SET 42 · Idioms 411–420

411. Crystallise one's thinking

- To clarify and sharpen one's ideas or plans.
"The workshop helped to crystallise the team's thinking on the strategy."

412. Curry favour with

- To seek to gain advantage by flattery or servile behaviour.
"He was notorious for currying favour with those in positions of authority."

413. Cut a sorry figure

- To create a poor or pathetic impression.
"The delegation cut a sorry figure at the international summit."

414. Cut and dried

- Settled and established beyond doubt.
"The question was by no means as cut and dried as it appeared."

415. Cut corners

- To sacrifice quality in order to save time or money.
"The contractor had clearly cut corners during the construction."

416. Cut no ice

- To have no influence or effect.
"His lengthy explanations cut no ice with the experienced auditors."

417. The cut of someone's jib

- Someone's general appearance or manner.
"He liked the cut of the new recruit's jib immediately."

418. Cut one's coat according to one's cloth

- To live within one's means.
"Sound management requires cutting one's coat according to one's cloth."

419. Cut short

- To bring something to an end before it is complete.
"The summit was cut short by the announcement of a national emergency."

420. Cut the cackle

- To stop talking and get to the point.
"The chairman urged everyone to cut the cackle and focus on the agenda."

SET 43 · Idioms 421–430

421. Cut the Gordian knot

■ To resolve a complex problem by bold, decisive action.
"The arbitrator cut the Gordian knot by imposing a binding settlement."

422. Cut the ground from under one's feet

■ To undermine someone's position.
"The new evidence cut the ground from under the defence's feet."

423. Cut to the bone

■ To reduce to the absolute minimum.
"The budget had been cut to the bone, leaving no margin for error."

424. Cut to the chase

■ To get to the main point without wasting time.
"The chairman urged the committee to cut to the chase."

425. Cut to the quick

■ To wound deeply, especially emotionally.
"The criticism cut to the quick of those who had worked hardest on the project."

426. A damp squib

■ Something that fails to achieve the expected effect.
"The much-anticipated report proved a considerable damp squib."

427. Dampen one's ardour

■ To reduce someone's enthusiasm or passion.
"The lukewarm reception dampened the team's ardour somewhat."

428. Dance on someone's grave

■ To take pleasure in the misfortune or downfall of an enemy.
"His rivals were accused of dancing on his professional grave."

429. Dance to someone's tune

■ To obey someone's wishes without independent judgement.
"The committee danced entirely to the minister's tune."

430. Dare to differ

■ To have the courage to hold a different view from the majority.
"She dared to differ from the consensus and was proved right."

SET 44 · Idioms 431–440

431. A dark horse

■ A person who achieves unexpected success.
"The young candidate proved the dark horse of the election."

432. Dash one's hopes

■ To destroy or severely disappoint one's expectations.
"The adverse ruling dashed the hopes of all who had supported the appeal."

433. Day of reckoning

■ A time when one must face the consequences of past actions.
"The day of reckoning had arrived for those responsible for the crisis."

434. Dead and buried

■ Completely finished and forgotten.
"He treated the old quarrel as dead and buried."

435. Dead cert

■ Something regarded as absolutely certain.
"His re-election had been considered a dead cert until the scandal broke."

436. Dead end

■ A point from which no progress is possible.
"The research reached a complete dead end."

437. Dead in the water

■ Completely ineffective; without any prospect of success.
"Without additional funding, the project was dead in the water."

438. A dead letter

■ A law or agreement no longer enforced or relevant.
"The old treaty had become a dead letter, honoured by neither side."

439. A dead ringer

■ A person or thing that is an exact double of another.
"The understudy was a dead ringer for the lead actor."

440. Deal a blow to

■ To cause significant damage or harm to something.
"The report dealt a serious blow to the government's credibility."

SET 45 · Idioms 441–450

441. Defend to the last

■ To protect something or someone with total commitment.
"He was prepared to defend the principle to the last."

442. Defy the odds

■ To succeed despite very unfavourable probabilities.
"The initiative defied all the odds and succeeded spectacularly."

443. Deliver the goods

■ To fulfil a promise or meet expectations.
"The new system promised much but ultimately failed to deliver the goods."

444. Demand accountability

■ To insist that those in authority answer for their actions.
"Civil society continued to demand accountability from its institutions."

445. Demonstrate beyond doubt

■ To prove conclusively.
"The evidence demonstrated beyond doubt that the accounts had been falsified."

446. Demonstrate one's credentials

■ To show evidence of one's qualifications or suitability.
"The early publications helped her demonstrate her scholarly credentials."

447. Deny all knowledge of

■ To claim complete ignorance of a matter.
"The minister denied all knowledge of the unofficial arrangement."

448. Depart from the script

■ To act or speak in a way not previously planned or agreed.
"His remarks at the press conference departed significantly from the script."

449. Derive one's authority from

■ To obtain the legitimacy to act from a particular source.
"The committee derives its authority from the founding statute."

450. Derogatory in tone

■ Expressing or showing a critical and dismissive attitude.
"The language of the report was considered derogatory in tone."

SET 46 · Idioms 451–460

451. Deserve to be taken seriously

■ To merit genuine consideration rather than dismissal.
"The proposal was unconventional but deserved to be taken seriously."

452. Desist from

■ To cease doing something; to stop.
"He was formally required to desist from any further contact with the witnesses."

453. Devil's in the detail

■ The difficult or problematic aspects lie in the specific details.
"The framework looked sound, but as always the devil was in the detail."

454. Die is cast

■ An irrevocable decision has been made.
"With the announcement made public, the die was cast."

455. A different kettle of fish

■ A completely different matter or situation.
"Managing people is a different kettle of fish from writing policy."

456. Dig deep

■ To make a special effort; to call upon one's deepest reserves.
"The team had to dig very deep to complete the project on time."

457. Dig one's own grave

■ To cause one's own downfall through one's actions.
"By alienating his closest allies, he dug his own grave."

458. The dirty end of the stick

■ The unfair or unpleasant part of something.
"He always seemed to get the dirty end of the stick."

459. Discredit oneself

■ To damage one's own reputation through one's behaviour.
"By making such reckless claims, he had thoroughly discredited himself."

460. Disown responsibility

■ To refuse to acknowledge accountability.
"The minister was accused of disowning all responsibility for the failure."

SET 47 · Idioms 461–470

461. Distinguish oneself

■ To attract special attention or admiration through one's actions.

"She had distinguished herself as a scholar of exceptional rigour."

462. Do a volte-face

■ To make a sudden and complete reversal of position.

"The government did a complete volte-face on the question of public ownership."

463. Do justice to

■ To give proper treatment or recognition to something.

"No brief summary could do justice to the complexity of the argument."

464. Do the groundwork

■ To carry out the essential preparatory stages of a task.

"The first year of the research was spent doing the necessary groundwork."

465. Dog eat dog

■ Characterised by ruthless competition.

"The publishing industry was widely known as a dog-eat-dog world."

466. A dog with two tails

■ Someone extremely happy.

"When the award was announced, he was like a dog with two tails."

467. Dog-and-pony show

■ An elaborate but superficial presentation designed to impress.

"The product launch was little more than a dog-and-pony show."

468. Dominate the agenda

■ To be the main focus of discussion or attention.

"The question of funding dominated the agenda at every meeting."

469. Don't count your chickens before they are hatched

■ Do not assume success before it is certain.

"Sound judgement requires that one does not count chickens before they are hatched."

470. A done deal

■ Something already agreed and not open to further negotiation.

"By the time the public was consulted, the merger was effectively a done deal."

SET 48 · Idioms 471–480

471. Dot the i's and cross the t's

■ To attend carefully to every detail.

"Before the contract was signed, every clause was dotted and crossed."

472. Double Dutch

■ Completely incomprehensible language.

"The technical specification was double Dutch to the layman."

473. A double-edged sword

■ Something with both advantages and disadvantages.

"Fame is a double-edged sword — it brings both privilege and intrusion."

474. Down and out

■ Completely without money or resources.

"After the bankruptcy, he was utterly down and out."

475. Down in the dumps

■ Feeling sad or depressed.

"After the rejection, she was decidedly down in the dumps."

476. Down to earth

■ Practical and realistic, without pretension.

"Despite his fame, the scientist remained entirely down to earth."

477. Down to the wire

■ Reaching a conclusion only at the last possible moment.

"The negotiations went right down to the wire."

478. Draw a blank

■ To fail to find a solution or obtain information.

"Despite extensive research, the historians drew a blank."

479. Draw a conclusion

■ To reach a judgement based on available evidence.

"The committee was not yet in a position to draw firm conclusions."

480. Draw a distinction

■ To make a clear difference between two things.

"It is important to draw a clear distinction between correlation and causation."

SET 49 · Idioms 481–490

481. Draw a line in the sand

■ To set a firm final limit.

"The negotiators drew a line in the sand over the territorial concessions."

482. Draw a red line

■ To establish an absolute limit which must not be transgressed.

"The committee drew a red line on any compromise over the core principle."

483. Draw a veil over

■ To avoid discussing something embarrassing or unpleasant.

"Historians have sometimes drawn a veil over the more unsavoury episodes."

484. Draw blood

■ To cause genuine hurt or damage to an opponent in an argument.

"Her counter-argument drew blood, and the panel could see it."

485. Draw in one's horns

■ To become more cautious or to reduce one's ambitions.

"Faced with opposition, the administration drew in its horns."

486. Draw on experience

■ To make use of knowledge gained from previous events.

"She drew on thirty years of experience in framing her response."

487. Draw to a close

■ To approach or reach an end.

"As the debate drew to a close, no clear consensus had emerged."

488. Drive a hard bargain

■ To negotiate aggressively to get the most favourable terms.

"The union representative drove a hard bargain at the wage talks."

489. Drive a wedge between

■ To cause estrangement between people.

"The dispute drove a wedge between formerly close allies."

490. Drive the point home

■ To make something clearly and emphatically understood.

"The final paragraph drove the point home with great force."

SET 50 · Idioms 491–500

491. Drop a brick

■ To make an embarrassing or tactless remark.

"He dropped an enormous brick by referring to her predecessor's failures."

492. Drop a dime

■ To inform the authorities about someone's wrongdoing.

"A disgruntled employee dropped a dime on the management."

493. A drop in the ocean

■ An insignificantly small contribution.

"His donation, though generous, was a drop in the ocean."

494. Drop the ball

■ To fail to fulfil a responsibility; to make a significant error.

"The legal team dropped the ball at the crucial moment."

495. Dust and ashes

■ Worthless or meaningless; a great disappointment.

"After all the promises, the outcome felt like dust and ashes."

496. The dust settles

■ The situation calms down after a period of agitation.

"Once the dust settled, a more balanced assessment became possible."

497. An eager beaver

■ A person who is very enthusiastic and hardworking.

"The new intern was an eager beaver, always first to arrive."

498. Earn one's stripes

■ To achieve recognition and status through one's efforts and performance.

"He had earned his stripes through decades of diligent scholarship."

499. Earn the right to

■ To deserve something through one's efforts.

"She had earned the right to lead the delegation."

500. Eat crow

■ To admit one's error and accept humiliation.

"Forced to retract his prediction publicly, the analyst had to eat crow."

SET 51 · Idioms 501–510

501. Eat dirt

■ To accept humiliation or defeat.
"After the verdict, the accused had to eat dirt."

502. Eat humble pie

■ To admit one's error and apologise.
"After his confident forecast proved wrong, he was forced to eat humble pie."

503. Eat into

■ To use or reduce a supply of something gradually.
"The unexpected costs ate significantly into the projected surplus."

504. Eat one's heart out

■ To suffer deeply from jealousy or unfulfilled longing.
"She ate her heart out watching her rival receive the recognition she deserved."

505. Eat one's words

■ To be forced to retract one's statements.
"After the election, many commentators were forced to eat their words."

506. Effective immediately

■ Coming into force at once, without delay.
"The regulation came into effect immediately upon signature."

507. The elephant in the room

■ An obvious problem that nobody wishes to discuss.
"The budget deficit was the elephant in the room throughout the conference."

508. Elevate to a principle

■ To treat a pragmatic choice as a matter of fundamental importance.
"He elevated pragmatic convenience to a principle of governance."

509. An embarrassment of riches

■ An overabundance of good things, creating difficulty of choice.
"The exhibition presented an embarrassment of riches."

510. Embrace the challenge

■ To accept and tackle a difficult situation willingly.
"The team embraced the challenge with commendable energy."

SET 52 · Idioms 511–520

511. Emerge victorious

■ To succeed after a contest or struggle.
"Against all expectations, the smaller party emerged victorious."

512. Encounter a stumbling block

■ To meet with an obstacle that impedes progress.
"The negotiations encountered a significant stumbling block on day three."

513. Encounter resistance

■ To meet opposition or obstruction.
"The proposal encountered stiff resistance in the upper chamber."

514. End in smoke

■ To come to nothing; to fail completely.
"After years of promising negotiation, the process ended in smoke."

515. The ends justify the means

■ The acceptability of an objective vindicates the methods used.
"Critics rejected the doctrine that the ends justify the means."

516. Engage in good faith

■ To participate in a process honestly and with genuine intent.
"Both parties were urged to engage in good faith."

517. Equal to the task

■ Capable of managing a particular responsibility.
"The inquiry established whether the institutions were equal to the task."

518. Err on the side of caution

■ To choose the safer option when uncertain.
"In such cases, it is always wise to err on the side of caution."

519. Espouse a cause

■ To publicly adopt and advocate for a particular belief or principle.
"He had espoused the cause of judicial independence throughout his career."

520. Establish a precedent

■ To set an example that may be followed in future cases.
"The ruling established an important precedent for subsequent proceedings."

SET 53 · Idioms 521–530

521. Even the playing field

■ To make conditions fair and equal for all.

"The new regulations were intended to even the playing field for smaller firms."

522. Even the score

■ To retaliate so as to restore equality after an injustice.

"He was patient, biding his time until he could even the score."

523. Every cloud has a silver lining

■ Every misfortune has some positive aspect.

"Though painful, the redundancy had a silver lining."

524. Every dog has its day

■ Everyone will have a period of success at some point.

"He remained patient, knowing that every dog has its day."

525. Examine in minute detail

■ To investigate something with great thoroughness and precision.

"The committee examined each clause in minute detail."

526. Exception to the rule

■ A case that does not conform to the general pattern.

"Her success was a notable exception to the general rule."

527. Exercise due diligence

■ To undertake the appropriate level of care and investigation.

"Investors are required to exercise due diligence before committing capital."

528. An exercise in futility

■ An attempt that is pointless and bound to fail.

"Further negotiation at this stage would be an exercise in futility."

529. Exercise one's right

■ To make active use of a right one possesses.

"Every citizen is entitled to exercise the right to vote."

530. Exert one's authority

■ To use the power or influence one holds.

"The chairperson exerted her authority to bring the meeting to order."

SET 54 · Idioms 531–540

531. Exhaust all options

■ To try every available course of action before giving up.

"Every available option must be exhausted before admitting defeat."

532. Exhaust the possibilities

■ To consider and try every available option.

"Before making a final decision, the committee exhausted all possibilities."

533. Explore every avenue

■ To investigate every possible course of action.

"The investigators were instructed to explore every avenue."

534. Extend an olive branch

■ To make a gesture of reconciliation.

"The response was widely seen as an olive branch to the estranged faction."

535. Extend beyond

■ To go further than the limits of something.

"The implications of the ruling extend well beyond the immediate case."

536. Extract a concession

■ To obtain an agreement or compromise, usually under pressure.

"The negotiators managed to extract a significant concession from the other side."

537. An eye for an eye

■ A principle of exact retaliation.

"The code was based on an eye for an eye, offering no room for clemency."

538. The eye of the storm

■ The centre of a difficult situation, often calm compared to the surroundings.

"The chairman found himself in the eye of the storm."

539. An eye-opener

■ Something surprisingly revealing.

"The audit proved a genuine eye-opener for the board."

540. Face the music

■ To accept the consequences of one's actions.

"Having published the article, she had to face the music from her colleagues."

SET 55 · Idioms 541–550

541. Face value

■ The apparent or nominal value, without deeper investigation.
"The offer should not be accepted entirely at face value."

542. Face with equanimity

■ To confront something difficult with calm composure.
"She faced the hostile questioning with admirable equanimity."

543. Fail to measure up

■ To be inadequate in relation to required standards.
"The response from the authorities failed to measure up to public expectations."

544. A fair-weather friend

■ A friend loyal only in good times.
"He proved a fair-weather friend when the difficulties arose."

545. A fait accompli

■ Something that has already been decided or done, leaving others no choice but to accept it.
"The merger was presented to shareholders as a fait accompli."

546. Fall between two stools

■ To fail to achieve either of two alternatives.
"The policy fell between two stools and satisfied neither constituency."

547. Fall flat

■ To produce no effect; to fail completely.
"The attempt at humour fell completely flat before the serious audience."

548. Fall foul of

■ To come into conflict with or transgress.
"The journalist fell foul of the official secrets legislation."

549. Fall from grace

■ To lose one's previously respected position.
"The minister's fall from grace was as swift as it was unexpected."

550. Fall into disrepute

■ To lose public respect and standing.
"The institution had fallen into disrepute through years of mismanagement."

SET 56 · Idioms 551–560

551. Fall into line

■ To conform to rules or expectations.
"Eventually all the dissenters fell into line."

552. Fall into place

■ For various elements to become clear or work out satisfactorily.
"Once the key facts were established, everything else fell into place."

553. Fall on deaf ears

■ To be ignored or disregarded.
"His earnest warnings fell entirely on deaf ears."

554. Fall on one's feet

■ To land in a fortunate position after a difficult situation.
"Despite the redundancy, he fell on his feet with an even better position."

555. Fall on one's sword

■ To accept responsibility and resign.
"The director chose to fall on his sword rather than implicate his colleagues."

556. Fall on stony ground

■ To fail to achieve the intended effect.
"Appeals for restraint fell on entirely stony ground."

557. Fall out of favour

■ To lose the approval or affection of those in authority.
"The policy had fallen out of favour long before it was formally abandoned."

558. Fall prey to

■ To become a victim of something.
"Even experienced scholars fall prey to confirmation bias."

559. Fall to one's lot

■ To become one's responsibility or fate.
"It fell to his lot to deliver the unwelcome news."

560. Fall to the ground

■ To fail or be unsuccessful.
"Without support, the plan fell to the ground."

SET 57 · Idioms 561–570

561. Fall victim to

- To be harmed or destroyed by something.
"The project fell victim to bureaucratic obstruction."

562. A false dawn

- Something promising that turns out to be disappointing.
"The early economic upturn proved a false dawn."

563. A false economy

- An apparent saving that in fact leads to greater expenditure later.
"Cutting maintenance budgets proved a false economy within two years."

564. Familiar ground

- A subject or situation one knows well.
"Constitutional law was entirely familiar ground for the new appointee."

565. Fan the flames

- To intensify a difficult or inflamed situation.
"Inflammatory rhetoric only fanned the flames of the dispute."

566. Far and away

- By a considerable margin; clearly.
"She was far and away the most accomplished candidate."

567. Far and near

- In all directions; everywhere.
"Delegates had gathered from far and near."

568. Far and wide

- Over a large area; in many places.
"The reputation of the institute was known far and wide."

569. A far cry from

- Very different from something.
"His present circumstances are a far cry from his privileged upbringing."

570. A far-fetched argument

- A claim or reasoning that is unconvincing and improbable.
"The defence rested on a far-fetched argument that persuaded no one."

SET 58 · Idioms 571–580

571. Fate worse than death

- An extremely unpleasant or undesirable outcome.
"For the proud institution, public humiliation was a fate worse than death."

572. A feather in one's cap

- An achievement to be proud of.
"Winning the prize was a real feather in the department's cap."

573. Feather one's nest

- To enrich oneself at the expense of others.
"Critics accused the trustees of feathering their own nests."

574. Feed the flames

- To intensify a dispute or passionate situation.
"The irresponsible reporting only served to feed the flames of public anger."

575. Few and far between

- Rare; infrequent.
"Opportunities of this quality were few and far between."

576. Fifth column

- A group working secretly within a country to undermine it.
"The authorities suspected the existence of a fifth column within the organisation."

577. Fight shy of

- To avoid something from reluctance or timidity.
"The board fought shy of any commitment to structural reform."

578. A fight to the finish

- A struggle pursued until one side wins decisively.
"The election campaign was nothing short of a fight to the finish."

579. The final nail in the coffin

- The last action that leads definitively to failure.
"The withdrawal of investment was the final nail in the coffin."

580. Find common cause with

- To discover shared aims or interests.
"The two organisations found common cause on the issue of transparency."

SET 59 · Idioms 581–590

581. Find expression in

■ To be manifested or articulated in a particular form.
"Her frustration found expression in a remarkably candid letter."

582. Find fault with

■ To identify errors or shortcomings in something.
"Critics were quick to find fault with the methodology."

583. Find one's footing

■ To become established and secure in a new situation.
"It took the new administration some time to find its footing."

584. Fine line between

■ A subtle or narrow distinction between two similar things.
"There is a fine line between assertiveness and aggression."

585. Fine-tune

■ To make small adjustments to improve something.
"The proposal still required some fine-tuning before it could be submitted."

586. Firm up

■ To make something more definite or certain.
"Plans needed to be firmed up before any announcement was made."

587. First and foremost

■ Most importantly; above all else.
"First and foremost, the committee must establish its terms of reference."

588. First come, first served

■ Those who arrive or apply earliest receive priority.
"Tickets were allocated on a strictly first-come, first-served basis."

589. The first port of call

■ The first place one goes or step one takes to deal with a problem.
"The complaints procedure is the first port of call for grievances."

590. First principles

■ The most fundamental concepts from which all reasoning proceeds.
"The committee returned to first principles in reconsidering the policy."

SET 60 · Idioms 591–600

591. A fish in troubled waters

■ Someone who exploits an unsettled situation.
"The opportunistic investor proved a skilled fish in troubled waters."

592. A fish out of water

■ A person in an uncomfortable or unfamiliar environment.
"At the formal banquet he felt entirely like a fish out of water."

593. Fit to burst

■ Extremely full or intense, to the point of excess.
"He was fit to burst with barely suppressed enthusiasm."

594. Fix in one's mind

■ To establish something firmly in one's memory or understanding.
"The principle had been firmly fixed in the minds of all participants."

595. Flesh out

■ To elaborate on or develop something with more detail.
"The outline needed to be substantially fleshed out before submission."

596. Float someone's boat

■ To appeal to or please someone.
"Abstract philosophy does not particularly float his boat."

597. Flog a dead horse

■ To waste effort on something that is no longer relevant.
"Continuing to argue the point was flogging a dead horse."

598. Fly in the face of

■ To contradict or oppose something directly.
"The new evidence flew in the face of the established narrative."

599. A fly in the ointment

■ A minor flaw that spoils something otherwise good.
"The sole fly in the ointment was the poor acoustics."

600. Fly off the handle

■ To lose one's temper suddenly.
"He had a tendency to fly off the handle at the slightest provocation."

SET 61 · Idioms 601–610

601. A fly on the wall

■ An unnoticed observer of a private situation.
"I wished I had been a fly on the wall at that board meeting."

602. A fly on the wheel

■ Someone who overestimates their importance in events.
"He fancied himself a key player but was merely a fly on the wheel."

603. Fly the flag for

■ To publicly represent or support something.
"She had been flying the flag for women's access to higher education for decades."

604. Follow in someone's footsteps

■ To do the same as a predecessor.
"She chose to follow in her mentor's footsteps by pursuing an academic career."

605. Follow one's nose

■ To proceed instinctively.
"Unable to find a map, they simply followed their noses."

606. Follow suit

■ To do the same as someone else; to conform to a pattern.
"Other institutions quickly followed suit."

607. Food for thought

■ Something that provides cause for serious reflection.
"The keynote address provided considerable food for thought."

608. A fool's errand

■ A task that is pointless or unlikely to succeed.
"Trying to negotiate single-handed was a fool's errand."

609. For all intents and purposes

■ In every practical sense; effectively.
"For all intents and purposes, the conference had reached a deadlock."

610. For all one's worth

■ Using all one's effort and energy.
"He argued for all he was worth against the proposed amendment."

SET 62 · Idioms 611–620

611. For better or for worse

■ Whatever the outcome.
"For better or for worse, the decision had been made."

612. For good measure

■ As an additional contribution beyond what is required.
"He added a brief historical survey for good measure."

613. For the common good

■ In a way that benefits the population or community as a whole.
"The legislation was presented as acting for the common good."

614. For the duration

■ For the entire period of something.
"He committed himself to the project for the duration."

615. For the foreseeable future

■ For as long ahead as can reasonably be predicted.
"The policy was to remain in place for the foreseeable future."

616. For the sake of argument

■ Assuming something to be true for the purpose of discussion.
"For the sake of argument, let us accept the premise."

617. For what it is worth

■ Used to introduce an opinion one is not entirely certain is valuable.
"For what it is worth, my reading of the evidence is as follows."

618. Force of circumstances

■ A situation that compels a particular course of action.
"The decision was forced upon them by force of circumstances."

619. Force of habit

■ Behaviour established by long practice.
"She still rose at five o'clock every morning, purely by force of habit."

620. Force one's hand

■ To compel someone to act before they are ready.
"The leaked document forced the minister's hand."

SET 63 · Idioms 621–630

621. Force one's way

■ To achieve something by persistent effort despite obstacles.
"The proposal had to force its way through considerable opposition."

622. Force the issue

■ To insist on a decision being made without further delay.
"By issuing an ultimatum, she forced the issue."

623. A foregone conclusion

■ An outcome regarded as inevitable before it occurs.
"Given the evidence, the verdict was a foregone conclusion."

624. A foregone era

■ A period in the past that has completely passed.
"The deference once shown to authority belongs to a foregone era."

625. Foreshadow events

■ To act as an early indication of things to come.
"The early warning signs had foreshadowed the eventual collapse."

626. Forge ahead

■ To make rapid progress.
"Despite the obstacles, the team forged steadily ahead."

627. Foster a culture of

■ To encourage and develop a particular set of attitudes or practices.
"The leadership sought to foster a culture of transparency."

628. Frame the debate

■ To determine the terms and boundaries within which a discussion takes place.
"Whoever frames the debate effectively controls the outcome."

629. Free rein

■ Complete freedom to act as one chooses.
"The research team was given free rein in its initial exploration."

630. French leave

■ Leaving without saying goodbye or without permission.
"He took French leave from the reception before the speeches were concluded."

SET 64 · Idioms 631–640

631. From a position of strength

■ From an advantageous situation with significant leverage.
"It is always preferable to negotiate from a position of strength."

632. From cradle to grave

■ Throughout the entire course of one's life.
"The welfare system was designed to provide support from cradle to grave."

633. From first principles

■ Starting from the most fundamental and basic premises.
"The problem needed to be addressed from first principles."

634. From good authority

■ Based on reliable and credible information.
"I can state from good authority that the decision has already been made."

635. From pillar to post

■ From one place to another without achieving anything.
"The applicant was sent from pillar to post by unhelpful officials."

636. From scratch

■ From the very beginning; without any prior preparation.
"After the fire, they had to rebuild the archive entirely from scratch."

637. From soup to nuts

■ Covering everything from beginning to end.
"The induction programme took new employees through the process from soup to nuts."

638. From the bottom of one's heart

■ With complete sincerity and genuine feeling.
"She thanked her supporters from the bottom of her heart."

639. From the horse's mouth

■ From the most direct or authoritative source.
"I heard the news from the horse's mouth."

640. From the word go

■ From the very beginning.
"It was clear from the word go that the project was underfunded."

SET 65 · Idioms 641–650

641. Fuel the debate

■ To provide material that keeps a controversy or discussion going.

"Each new disclosure fuelled the debate further."

642. Full of oneself

■ Conceited; excessively self-important.

"His colleagues found him insufferably full of himself."

643. Full of promise

■ Showing signs of future excellence or achievement.

"The early research was full of promise."

644. Full of the joys of spring

■ In a state of happiness and energy.

"He arrived at the meeting full of the joys of spring."

645. The full picture

■ A complete and accurate understanding of all relevant facts.

"Without the audit, no one had been working from the full picture."

646. Further one's cause

■ To advance or promote one's aims.

"The public endorsement did much to further their cause."

647. Gain a foothold

■ To establish a secure initial position from which to advance.

"The new party quickly gained a foothold in the major cities."

648. Gain the ascendancy

■ To achieve a position of dominance or superiority.

"The reformist faction steadily gained the ascendancy within the organisation."

649. Garner support

■ To gather or collect support from others.

"The proposal garnered widespread support across political lines."

650. Gather momentum

■ To build up speed, force, or support progressively.

"The campaign was gradually gathering momentum."

SET 66 · Idioms 651–660

651. Gauge public sentiment

■ To assess the mood or opinions of the general population.

"Several surveys were commissioned to gauge public sentiment."

652. Get a grip

■ To take control of a situation or of one's emotions.

"It was imperative that the department get a grip on expenditure."

653. Get a handle on

■ To begin to understand or control something.

"It took several months to get a proper handle on the scale of the problem."

654. Get a word in edgeways

■ To manage to say something during a dominated conversation.

"It was impossible to get a word in edgeways while he held forth."

655. Get along like a house on fire

■ To have an excellent and harmonious relationship.

"The two delegations got along like a house on fire."

656. Get away with

■ To escape without suffering punishment or consequences.

"The auditors were determined that no one would get away with falsifying records."

657. Get bogged down

■ To become so involved in something that progress is delayed.

"The committee got bogged down in procedural disputes."

658. Get down to brass tacks

■ To begin to discuss the most important and fundamental facts.

"It was time to get down to brass tacks and address the central issue."

659. Get into one's stride

■ To begin to work with confidence and effectiveness.

"It took the new director several months to get into his stride."

660. Get one's act together

■ To organise oneself more effectively.

"The committee needed urgently to get its act together."

SET 67 · Idioms 661–670

661. Get one's feet under the table

■ To become comfortable in a new situation or job.
"She needed a few weeks to get her feet under the table."

662. Get one's house in order

■ To organise one's affairs properly before proceeding.
"The regulator insisted that the institution get its house in order."

663. Get the ball rolling

■ To make a start on an activity or process.
"The chairman invited opening remarks to get the ball rolling."

664. Get the better of

■ To overcome or defeat someone or something.
"His emotions finally got the better of his composure."

665. Get the upper hand

■ To gain a position of advantage or control.
"After months of negotiation, the union finally got the upper hand."

666. Get to grips with

■ To begin to deal with a problem seriously.
"It was high time the government got to grips with the housing crisis."

667. Get to the bottom of

■ To discover the true facts or cause of something.
"The inquiry was established to get to the bottom of the matter."

668. Get under someone's skin

■ To irritate or annoy someone deeply.
"His casual dismissal of her work really got under her skin."

669. Get wind of

■ To receive indirect information about something.
"The press somehow got wind of the clandestine negotiations."

670. Gift of the gab

■ A natural talent for speaking fluently and persuasively.
"His success as a barrister owed much to his gift of the gab."

SET 68 · Idioms 671–680

671. Gird one's loins

■ To prepare oneself for action or a challenge.
"The team girded its loins for the most demanding phase of the project."

672. Give a fillip to

■ To provide a stimulus or boost to something.
"The investment gave a welcome fillip to the struggling sector."

673. Give a good account of oneself

■ To perform or behave creditably.
"Despite the pressure, the witness gave a remarkably good account of herself."

674. Give a wide berth to

■ To avoid something or someone deliberately.
"After the incident, she gave her former colleague a wide berth."

675. Give an account of

■ To provide an explanation or description.
"The witness was asked to give a full account of the events."

676. Give and take

■ A mutual exchange of concessions or compromises.
"Successful negotiation always requires a degree of give and take."

677. Give chapter and verse

■ To cite precise authority or detailed evidence.
"The professor could give chapter and verse for every assertion."

678. Give credence to

■ To lend belief or support to an idea or claim.
"The new evidence gave unexpected credence to the original theory."

679. Give credibility to

■ To make something more believable.
"The endorsement gave considerable credibility to the original claim."

680. Give effect to

■ To put a rule or decision into operation.
"The legislation gave formal effect to the recommendations of the commission."

SET 69 · Idioms 681–690

681. Give false colour to

■ To misrepresent or distort the truth.

"The selective quotation gave false colour to the author's position."

682. Give free rein to

■ To allow complete freedom of expression or action.

"The publisher gave the author free rein to develop the concept."

683. Give full rein to

■ To allow something to develop or be expressed without restriction.

"The programme gave full rein to imaginative solutions."

684. Give ground

■ To yield or concede under pressure.

"Neither side was prepared to give ground."

685. Give no quarter

■ To show no mercy or indulgence.

"In cross-examination, she gave no quarter to the evasive witness."

686. Give one's assent

■ To formally agree to or approve something.

"The monarch gave her assent to the bill."

687. Give one's word

■ To make a solemn promise.

"He gave his word that the information would remain confidential."

688. Give pause for thought

■ To cause one to stop and reflect carefully.

"The unexpected results gave the researchers considerable pause for thought."

689. Give rise to

■ To be the cause or origin of something.

"The ambiguous wording gave rise to considerable misunderstanding."

690. Give short shrift to

■ To deal with something quickly and dismissively.

"The panel gave short shrift to the weakly supported proposal."

SET 70 · Idioms 691–700

691. Give someone a run for their money

■ To provide strong competition.

"The young candidate gave the experienced incumbent a genuine run for their money."

692. Give the benefit of the doubt

■ To assume good intentions in the absence of clear evidence.

"The committee gave the candidate the benefit of the doubt."

693. Give the devil his due

■ To acknowledge the merits of an opponent.

"To give the devil his due, the plan was technically impressive."

694. Give the lie to

■ To show that something is false.

"His own actions gave the lie to his professed concern for justice."

695. Give the nod to

■ To give informal approval or sanction to something.

"The executive committee gave the nod to the revised proposal."

696. Give voice to

■ To express or articulate something on behalf of others.

"The report gave voice to concerns that had long gone unheard."

697. Give way to

■ To be replaced by something; to yield.

"Anxiety gradually gave way to a cautious optimism."

698. Gloss over

■ To deal with something superficially, ignoring problems.

"The report tended to gloss over the more inconvenient findings."

699. Go against the current

■ To act contrary to the prevailing trend or expectation.

"His decision to publish went against the current of scholarly opinion."

700. Go against the grain

■ To conflict with one's natural inclinations.

"Admitting error went entirely against the grain for such a proud man."

SET 71 · Idioms 701–710

701. Go against the tide

■ To oppose the prevailing opinion or trend.
"She has always been prepared to go against the tide on principle."

702. Go back on one's word

■ To fail to keep a promise; to renege.
"He had never, in his entire career, gone back on his word."

703. Go beyond the pale

■ To exceed what is acceptable.
"His conduct had gone entirely beyond the pale."

704. Go down in history

■ To be remembered as historically significant.
"The discovery went down in history as one of the most important of the century."

705. Go from bad to worse

■ To deteriorate progressively.
"Without intervention, the situation threatened to go from bad to worse."

706. Go from strength to strength

■ To continue to improve and become more successful.
"Under new management, the journal went from strength to strength."

707. Go hand in glove with

■ To be closely related or associated with something.
"Political power went hand in glove with financial privilege."

708. Go hand in hand

■ To be closely related or associated.
"Economic growth and political stability go hand in hand."

709. Go into the breach

■ To step forward and fill a gap left by another's failure.
"When the lead negotiator withdrew, she went into the breach."

710. Go off at a tangent

■ To suddenly begin talking or thinking about something unrelated.
"The discussion went off at a tangent and never returned to the central issue."

SET 72 · Idioms 711–720

711. Go on record

■ To formally state something so it is officially noted.
"She wished to go on record in opposition to the proposal."

712. Go over someone's head

■ To fail to be understood by someone; or to bypass someone in authority.
"The subtlety of the argument went entirely over his head."

713. Go over with a fine-tooth comb

■ To examine something very carefully and thoroughly.
"Every clause was gone over with a fine-tooth comb."

714. Go the extra mile

■ To make a special additional effort.
"The research team was known for going the extra mile."

715. Go through the motions

■ To do something without real commitment.
"He had been going through the motions for some years before resigning."

716. Go to any lengths

■ To be prepared to do anything necessary to achieve something.
"He was prepared to go to any lengths to vindicate his position."

717. Go to extraordinary lengths

■ To take exceptional trouble to achieve something.
"She went to extraordinary lengths to verify every fact."

718. Go to great lengths

■ To take extreme trouble to achieve something.
"The committee went to very great lengths to ensure accuracy."

719. Go to seed

■ To decline in condition or quality through neglect.
"Without proper management, the institution had gone to seed."

720. Go to the heart of

■ To address the most fundamental aspect of something.
"Her question went directly to the heart of the matter."

SET 73 · Idioms 721–730

721. Go to the wall

■ To fail or be ruined.

"Several smaller firms went to the wall during the recession."

722. Go with the flow

■ To adapt oneself to circumstances without resistance.

"Rather than resist the change, he chose to go with the flow."

723. To good effect

■ With beneficial results.

"The technique was employed to considerable good effect."

724. A Gordian knot

■ A highly complex and intractable problem.

"The constitutional question represented a genuine Gordian knot for the new government."

725. Govern by consensus

■ To make decisions through broad agreement rather than imposition.

"The organisation prided itself on governing by consensus."

726. Grasp the nettle

■ To tackle a difficult matter boldly.

"The time had come to grasp the nettle of pension reform."

727. Grasping at straws

■ Making desperate attempts to find a solution.

"By the final sessions, the negotiators were grasping at straws."

728. Grease someone's palm

■ To bribe someone.

"Contracts in that region were routinely won by greasing the right palms."

729. Grease the wheels

■ To facilitate a process, often through bribery or influence.

"A generous donation to the party fund helped to grease the wheels."

730. A green hand

■ An inexperienced person.

"As a green hand in the department, she listened and learned."

SET 74 · Idioms 731–740

731. Grist to the mill

■ Something that can be turned to useful advantage.

"Every piece of evidence was grist to the investigator's mill."

732. Ground-breaking research

■ Research that is innovative and opens up new areas of study.

"The ground-breaking research transformed understanding of the condition."

733. Hair of the dog

■ A drink of the same alcohol taken to remedy a hangover.

"He advocated a hair of the dog as a sovereign remedy."

734. Hair's breadth

■ A very small distance or margin.

"He had escaped a hair's breadth from disaster."

735. Hammer out

■ To resolve a problem through prolonged discussion.

"The parties worked through the night to hammer out a compromise."

736. Hammer the point home

■ To make something clearly and emphatically understood through repetition.

"The final chapters hammer the point home with impressive force."

737. Hand in hand

■ In close association; together.

"Responsibility and accountability must always go hand in hand."

738. Handle with care

■ To approach something very cautiously and delicately.

"The politically sensitive document required handling with great care."

739. Hang by a thread

■ To be in a state of extreme peril or uncertainty.

"The patient's recovery hung by a thread throughout the night."

740. Hang fire

■ To delay or remain in suspense.

"The decision was left hanging fire until the legal advice was received."

SET 75 · Idioms 741–750

741. Hang in the balance

■ To be in a state of great uncertainty.

"The future of the institution hung in the balance after the report."

742. Hang one's head in shame

■ To be deeply ashamed of one's behaviour.

"Those responsible for the deception had good cause to hang their heads in shame."

743. Happy-go-lucky

■ Carefree and unconcerned about the future.

"His happy-go-lucky approach sat uneasily with his colleagues' gravitas."

744. A hard act to follow

■ A person so excellent that successors struggle to match them.

"After such a distinguished tenure, he would be a hard act to follow."

745. Hard evidence

■ Evidence that is factual, verifiable, and impossible to dispute.

"The prosecution presented hard evidence that could not be refuted."

746. A hard nut to crack

■ A difficult problem or person to deal with.

"The corruption scandal proved a hard nut to crack for investigators."

747. A hard pill to swallow

■ Something unpleasant that must be accepted.

"Admitting the error publicly was a hard pill to swallow."

748. A hard-and-fast rule

■ A fixed and strict rule admitting no exceptions.

"There is no hard-and-fast rule governing the procedure."

749. Hard-headed

■ Unsentimental and realistic in one's approach.

"A hard-headed assessment of the situation was urgently required."

750. Harden one's resolve

■ To strengthen one's determination.

"The opposition's intransigence only hardened his resolve."

SET 76 · Idioms 751–760

751. Harp on the same string

■ To speak about the same subject persistently and tiresomely.

"He had a habit of harping on the same string at every meeting."

752. Have a bearing on

■ To be relevant to or affect something.

"The new disclosure had a direct bearing on the outcome."

753. Have a bee in one's bonnet

■ To be preoccupied or obsessed with an idea.

"He had a bee in his bonnet about procedural reform."

754. Have a bone to pick

■ To have a complaint or grievance to raise.

"The editor had a bone to pick with the journalist over the inaccurate report."

755. Have a brief for

■ To be officially charged with or responsible for something.

"The committee had a brief for examining financial irregularities."

756. Have a cross to bear

■ To have a heavy burden or difficult responsibility to endure.

"Every public figure has a cross to bear in the age of social media."

757. Have a field day

■ To enjoy a great deal of freedom or success, often at another's expense.

"The press had a field day with the revelation."

758. Have a grip on

■ To have a firm and effective understanding or control of something.

"She had an exceptionally firm grip on the technical details."

759. Have a long memory

■ To remember past events, especially wrongs, for a long time.

"The electorate had a long memory for broken promises."

760. Have a mandate for

■ To have the authority conferred by voters or constituents to do something.

"The government had a clear mandate for reform."

SET 77 · Idioms 761–770

761. Have a vested interest in

■ To have a personal stake in the outcome of something.
"The shareholders had an obvious vested interest in the outcome."

762. Have an ace up one's sleeve

■ To have a secret advantage held in reserve.
"The negotiator had at least one ace up her sleeve."

763. Have an agenda

■ To pursue a set of undisclosed aims or motivations.
"Critics suspected that the inquiry had an agenda of its own."

764. Have an axe to grind

■ To have a personal motive behind one's actions.
"Critics suspected he had an axe to grind in his review of the book."

765. Have ants in one's pants

■ To be restless or impatient.
"He clearly had ants in his pants and could not sit still."

766. Have authority over

■ To hold legitimate power to make decisions in a particular area.
"The committee had clear authority over the conduct of the examination."

767. Have deep pockets

■ To be wealthy.
"The project required an investor with deep pockets."

768. Have misgivings about

■ To have doubts or reservations about something.
"Several members had serious misgivings about the proposed course of action."

769. Have no truck with

■ To refuse to tolerate or have dealings with something.
"She had no truck with those who sought to cut ethical corners."

770. Have one's eye on

■ To be aiming for or interested in something.
"He had his eye on the directorship for some years."

SET 78 · Idioms 771–780

771. Have one's hands full

■ To be very busy or occupied.
"With the audit and the restructuring, the department had its hands full."

772. Have one's heart in one's mouth

■ To experience extreme anxiety.
"She had her heart in her mouth throughout the entire proceedings."

773. Have one's say

■ To be given the opportunity to express one's opinion.
"Every member was entitled to have their say before the vote."

774. Have other fish to fry

■ To have more important matters to attend to.
"He declined graciously, explaining he had other fish to fry."

775. Have reservations about

■ To have doubts or concerns about something.
"She had serious reservations about accepting the terms."

776. Have the courage of one's convictions

■ To act in accordance with one's beliefs despite opposition.
"She had the courage of her convictions and refused to sign."

777. Have the last laugh

■ To triumph in the end after apparent failure.
"Dismissed early in his career, he had the last laugh when the prize was awarded."

778. Have the whip hand

■ To be in a dominant or controlling position.
"Throughout the negotiations, the larger party had the whip hand."

779. Have two strings to one's bow

■ To have an alternative plan or skill.
"A prudent professional always has two strings to the bow."

780. Head and shoulders above

■ Significantly superior to all others.
"She stood head and shoulders above her contemporaries in the field."

SET 79 · Idioms 781–790

781. Head in the right direction

■ To be moving towards the correct or desirable outcome.

"The latest indicators suggested the project was heading in the right direction."

782. Heart and soul

■ With complete dedication and enthusiasm.

"He threw himself heart and soul into the project."

783. A heartbeat away

■ Extremely close in position, time, or importance.

"The vice president is always a heartbeat away from the highest office."

784. Hedge one's bets

■ To reduce risk by supporting multiple possibilities.

"Rather than commit fully, the investors wisely hedged their bets."

785. Heighten awareness

■ To increase the level of public or collective attention to something.

"The campaign was designed to heighten awareness of the issue."

786. Help matters along

■ To take steps to accelerate or improve a situation.

"A timely intervention from the chair helped matters along considerably."

787. Hide one's light under a bushel

■ To conceal one's talents through excessive modesty.

"She was too inclined to hide her light under a bushel."

788. High and dry

■ Left in a helpless position without assistance.

"When the partners withdrew, the company was left high and dry."

789. High stakes

■ A situation in which the consequences of failure are very serious.

"The summit was a high-stakes encounter with significant consequences."

790. Hinge entirely on

■ To depend completely and exclusively on a single factor.

"The entire argument hinged on the authenticity of the document."

SET 80 · Idioms 791–800

791. Hinge on

■ To depend entirely upon.

"The success of the initiative hinged on securing public trust."

792. History repeats itself

■ Past events are liable to recur in similar forms.

"As history so frequently repeats itself, the same errors were made again."

793. Hit a brick wall

■ To encounter an insurmountable obstacle.

"The research hit a brick wall when the archive was found incomplete."

794. Hit below the belt

■ To make an unfair or dishonourable attack.

"To bring his family into the argument was to hit below the belt."

795. Hit someone below the belt

■ To act unfairly or unsportingly.

"The personal attack was a blow well below the belt."

796. Hit the mark

■ To be accurate or correct.

"His analysis of the situation was entirely hit the mark."

797. Hit the nail on the head

■ To describe something with complete precision.

"The reviewer hit the nail on the head with his assessment."

798. Hit the spot

■ To be exactly what is needed.

"After the long meeting, a cup of tea truly hit the spot."

799. Hitch horses together

■ To work together in cooperation.

"The two departments finally hitched horses together on the joint initiative."

800. Hobson's choice

■ An apparent choice that offers no real alternative.

"Accept the terms or withdraw: it was Hobson's choice."

SET 81 · Idioms 801–810

801. Hold a mirror up to

■ To reflect something truthfully so that it can be seen clearly.

"The documentary held a mirror up to the failures of the system."

802. Hold all the aces

■ To be in a position of considerable advantage.

"At the start of negotiations, the vendors held all the aces."

803. Hold in abeyance

■ To postpone or suspend something temporarily.

"The matter was held in abeyance pending the outcome of the appeal."

804. Hold in check

■ To prevent something from developing or increasing.

"The reserve funds were sufficient to hold the crisis in check."

805. Hold in high esteem

■ To regard with great respect.

"She was held in the highest esteem by her contemporaries."

806. Hold in reserve

■ To retain something for future use.

"Several arguments were held in reserve for the final hearing."

807. Hold no brief for

■ To have no obligation to support.

"The reviewer held no brief for either school of thought."

808. Hold one's counsel

■ To refrain from sharing one's opinions; to remain discreet.

"A wise diplomat learns early to keep one's counsel."

809. Hold one's fire

■ To refrain from action or criticism until the appropriate moment.

"The opposition held its fire, waiting for a more opportune occasion."

810. Hold one's ground

■ To maintain one's position under pressure.

"Despite fierce opposition, the minister held his ground."

SET 82 · Idioms 811–820

811. Hold one's horses

■ To wait and be patient.

"Hold your horses — no decision has yet been made."

812. Hold one's nerve

■ To remain calm and determined under intense pressure.

"She held her nerve magnificently throughout the cross-examination."

813. Hold one's peace

■ To remain silent rather than expressing one's opinion.

"He chose to hold his peace rather than inflame the situation further."

814. Hold one's tongue

■ To refrain from speaking when one might wish to.

"She held her tongue throughout the meeting, biding her time."

815. Hold out the olive branch

■ To make a gesture of reconciliation.

"The response extended an olive branch to the estranged faction."

816. Hold sway

■ To have great power or influence over a situation or group.

"The traditional view held sway in the profession for several decades."

817. Hold the balance of power

■ To be in a position where one's support determines the outcome.

"The smaller parties held the balance of power in the legislature."

818. Hold the fort

■ To maintain a position or responsibility in someone's absence.

"The deputy held the fort admirably while the director was abroad."

819. Hold the line

■ To maintain a position or standard under pressure.

"The central bank committed to holding the line on interest rates."

820. Hold up to scrutiny

■ To withstand close and critical examination.

"The argument was subjected to rigorous scrutiny and held up well."

SET 83 · Idioms 821–830

821. Hold water

■ To be logically consistent; to hold up under scrutiny.
"Under cross-examination, the alibi simply did not hold water."

822. Hollow out

■ To weaken something fundamentally by removing its essential substance.
"Years of underfunding had hollowed out the institution's core capacity."

823. Hollow victory

■ A success that brings little satisfaction.
"Winning on such grounds amounted to a hollow victory."

824. Honour among thieves

■ A code of loyalty observed even among wrongdoers.
"Even in the criminal underworld, there was said to be honour among thieves."

825. A hornet's nest

■ A situation full of trouble and controversy.
"The inquiry stirred up a real hornet's nest."

826. A horse of a different colour

■ A matter fundamentally different from what was being discussed.
"Whether to expand is one question; finding capital is a horse of a different colour."

827. Hot on the heels of

■ Closely following something.
"The second report came hot on the heels of the first."

828. A hot potato

■ A controversial issue that is difficult to handle.
"Immigration remained a political hot potato."

829. A house of cards

■ A precarious structure or scheme liable to collapse at any moment.
"The entire financial strategy was a house of cards."

830. Husband one's resources

■ To use one's resources carefully and prudently.
"During the lean years, they were forced to husband their resources."

SET 84 · Idioms 831–840

831. Hush money

■ Money paid to secure someone's silence.
"Allegations emerged that hush money had been paid to suppress the story."

832. If the cap fits, wear it

■ If a description applies to you, accept it.
"The criticism was pointed but fair — if the cap fits, wear it."

833. If the worst comes to the worst

■ If the most unfavourable outcome occurs.
"If the worst comes to the worst, we have adequate reserves."

834. Ignore at one's peril

■ To disregard something at the risk of serious consequences.
"The warnings of the experts were ignored at the government's peril."

835. Ill-gotten gains

■ Profits or benefits acquired through dishonest or illegal means.
"The legislation was designed to reclaim ill-gotten gains."

836. In a bind

■ In a difficult predicament with limited options.
"Without the missing documentation, the committee was in a considerable bind."

837. In a cleft stick

■ In a dilemma where every available option is difficult.
"The committee found itself in a cleft stick."

838. In a holding pattern

■ In a state of waiting without progress or development.
"The project remained in a holding pattern while funding was sought."

839. In a nutshell

■ In the briefest possible terms; concisely.
"In a nutshell, the proposal lacks financial viability."

840. In a pickle

■ In a predicament or difficult situation.
"Without the missing documents, the legal team was in a pickle."

SET 85 · Idioms 841–850

841. In a state of flux

■ In a condition of continuing change and uncertainty.
"The regulatory environment remained in a state of flux."

842. In a word

■ To express the essential point briefly.
"In a word, the proposal was inadequate."

843. In all fairness

■ In order to be just and accurate.
"In all fairness, the original proposal was not without merit."

844. In bad odour with

■ Out of favour or in disgrace with someone.
"After the incident, he was decidedly in bad odour with the management."

845. In black and white

■ In clearly written or printed form; unambiguously stated.
"The terms were laid out in black and white in the contract."

846. In broad daylight

■ In full public view; at a time when one would expect to be seen.
"The irregularities had taken place in broad daylight, under nobody's supervision."

847. In cold blood

■ Deliberately and without emotion.
"The act was carried out in cold blood, without remorse."

848. In command of the facts

■ Having thorough knowledge of the relevant information.
"She was entirely in command of the facts when cross-examined."

849. In deep water

■ In serious trouble or difficulty.
"After the disclosure, the company found itself in deep water."

850. In deference to

■ Out of respect or consideration for.
"In deference to the wishes of the committee, the proposal was withdrawn."

SET 86 · Idioms 851–860

851. In defiance of

■ Acting in direct opposition to rules or instructions.
"The decision was taken in defiance of clear legal advice."

852. In dribs and drabs

■ In small and irregular amounts.
"Information about the affair had been released in dribs and drabs."

853. In due course

■ At the appropriate time; eventually.
"The full report would be published in due course."

854. In due proportion

■ In a manner that is appropriate relative to the circumstances.
"Criticism should be expressed in due proportion."

855. In for a penny, in for a pound

■ Having started something, one should see it through completely.
"The logic of the situation was clear — in for a penny, in for a pound."

856. In full swing

■ At the height of activity or operation.
"By midday, preparations were in full swing."

857. In good conscience

■ Acting in accordance with one's honest moral judgement.
"He could not in good conscience approve the measure."

858. In good faith

■ With honest intentions and sincerity.
"The offer was made entirely in good faith."

859. In good measure

■ To a significant and satisfactory degree.
"The outcome was due in good measure to the quality of the preparation."

860. In high dudgeon

■ In a state of considerable indignation.
"She left the meeting in high dudgeon after being contradicted publicly."

SET 87 · Idioms 861–870

861. In hot pursuit

■ In active and close chase of someone or something.
"The investigators were in hot pursuit of the relevant documentation."

862. In its infancy

■ At a very early stage of development.
"At the time, the technology was still in its infancy."

863. In keeping with

■ In accordance or harmony with something.
"The decision was entirely in keeping with the institution's established values."

864. In keeping with the spirit of

■ Consistent with the underlying intention, even if not the exact letter.
"The decision was in keeping with the spirit of the original agreement."

865. In large measure

■ To a considerable extent.
"The success was due in large measure to the quality of preparation."

866. In light of

■ Taking into account; given.
"In light of the new evidence, the committee reconsidered its position."

867. In marked contrast to

■ Differing very noticeably from something else.
"His approach was in marked contrast to that of his predecessor."

868. In name only

■ Existing as a title or label without the substance usually associated with it.
"Her role as chair was, by this point, in name only."

869. In no uncertain terms

■ Explicitly and emphatically.
"The chairman made his displeasure known in no uncertain terms."

870. In one's capacity as

■ In the specific role or function one holds.
"In her capacity as legal adviser, she was entitled to attend."

SET 88 · Idioms 871–880

871. In one's element

■ In circumstances that particularly suit one's abilities.
"Conducting seminars, he was completely in his element."

872. In one's own right

■ By virtue of one's own merits or position, not another's.
"She was a distinguished scholar in her own right."

873. In practice

■ When actually carried out; in reality.
"The theory was admirable; in practice, it proved unworkable."

874. In principle

■ In theory; as a general concept, without detail.
"The committee agreed in principle to the proposal."

875. In proportion to

■ In a ratio corresponding to something else.
"The response must be proportionate in proportion to the offence."

876. In proportion to the offence

■ Matching the severity of the response to that of the wrongdoing.
"Penalties must be proportionate in proportion to the offence."

877. In seventh heaven

■ In a state of extreme happiness.
"After the publication of her first novel, she was in seventh heaven."

878. In smooth waters

■ In a calm and stable situation.
"After the restructuring, the company sailed in remarkably smooth waters."

879. In tandem with

■ Alongside; in conjunction with.
"The policy operated in tandem with existing regulations."

880. In the absence of

■ Without; when something is lacking.
"In the absence of clear guidance, the default rules applied."

SET 89 · Idioms 881–890

881. In the ascendant

■ Increasing in power or influence.

"The reformist faction was clearly in the ascendant."

882. In the blink of an eye

■ Very quickly.

"The situation changed in the blink of an eye."

883. In the cold light of day

■ When considered calmly and rationally, away from emotion.

"In the cold light of day, the decision appeared far less reasonable."

884. In the dock

■ In a position of being accused and required to defend oneself.

"The entire system of regulation was effectively in the dock."

885. In the doldrums

■ In a state of stagnation or low spirits.

"The economy remained in the doldrums throughout the second quarter."

886. In the face of adversity

■ Despite severe difficulty or misfortune.

"He maintained his principles in the face of considerable adversity."

887. In the final analysis

■ When all other considerations have been taken into account.

"In the final analysis, the success of the policy depended on public trust."

888. In the final count

■ When everything has been assessed at the very end.

"In the final count, the motion was carried by a single vote."

889. In the final reckoning

■ When all the evidence has been considered.

"In the final reckoning, the policy had been a failure."

890. In the fullness of time

■ Eventually; at the appropriate time.

"In the fullness of time, the significance of the discovery would be recognised."

SET 90 · Idioms 891–900

891. In the heat of the moment

■ Acting impulsively under strong emotion.

"His remark was ill-considered, made in the heat of the moment."

892. In the hollow of one's hand

■ Under complete control.

"The prosecutor held the witness in the hollow of her hand."

893. In the interim

■ In the meantime; during the intervening period.

"In the interim, operations would continue under existing procedures."

894. In the lap of the gods

■ Dependent on fate; beyond human control.

"With all preparations made, the outcome lay in the lap of the gods."

895. In the limelight

■ At the centre of public attention.

"The scientist remained uncomfortable in the limelight of celebrity."

896. In the long run

■ Over an extended period of time; ultimately.

"In the long run, transparency invariably serves the public interest."

897. In the nick of time

■ At the very last moment before it is too late.

"The rescue party arrived in the very nick of time."

898. In the offing

■ Likely to happen in the near future.

"With elections in the offing, the government softened its rhetoric."

899. In the pipeline

■ Being developed or in preparation.

"Several major reforms were already in the pipeline."

900. In the public eye

■ Subject to general public attention and observation.

"Public figures must conduct themselves with care when in the public eye."

SET 91 · Idioms 901–910

901. In the same breath

■ Simultaneously; in an inconsistent or contradictory way.
"He praised the initiative and condemned it in the same breath."

902. In the spirit of

■ In accordance with the underlying intent or ethos of something.
"The decision was taken in the spirit of compromise."

903. In the spotlight

■ Subject to intense public attention.
"The organisation found itself unexpectedly in the spotlight."

904. In the teeth of

■ In defiant opposition to; in the face of.
"The project proceeded in the teeth of formidable opposition."

905. In the throes of

■ In the middle of a difficult or intense process.
"The institution was in the throes of a fundamental reorganisation."

906. In the twinkling of an eye

■ In an instant; very quickly.
"The situation changed in the twinkling of an eye."

907. In the vanguard of

■ At the leading edge of a movement or development.
"The university was in the vanguard of the reform movement."

908. In the wake of

■ As a consequence or result of.
"In the wake of the scandal, the legislation was promptly revised."

909. In two minds

■ Undecided between two alternatives.
"She remained in two minds about accepting the appointment."

910. In two shakes of a lamb's tail

■ Very quickly; in a moment.
"He promised to return in two shakes of a lamb's tail."

SET 92 · Idioms 911–920

911. In vain

■ Without success; futilely.
"All attempts to reach a compromise proved in vain."

912. In very truth

■ In absolute and complete honesty.
"In very truth, no satisfactory answer had been provided."

913. The ins and outs

■ All the details and complexities of a matter.
"She was fully conversant with the ins and outs of the procedure."

914. Invoke a precedent

■ To cite an earlier decision as justification for a current one.
"Counsel sought to invoke a precedent established in 1987."

915. Iron in the fire

■ An undertaking or project currently in progress.
"He always had several irons in the fire simultaneously."

916. It stands to reason

■ It is entirely logical and expected.
"It stands to reason that better training produces better performance."

917. An itching palm

■ A greedy desire for money, especially in bribes.
"The official's itching palm was well known to those seeking permits."

918. A jack of all trades

■ A person skilled in many areas but expert in none.
"Versatile but diffuse, he was a jack of all trades and master of none."

919. Join up the dots

■ To link facts or ideas to understand a situation.
"A careful reader can join up the dots from the available evidence."

920. Jump at the chance

■ To accept an opportunity eagerly.
"She jumped at the chance to address the annual conference."

SET 93 · Idioms 921–930

921. Jump on the bandwagon

■ To join a popular cause or trend opportunistically.
"Several politicians jumped on the bandwagon once the policy proved popular."

922. Jump the gun

■ To act before the proper time.
"The press release was issued too early — someone had jumped the gun."

923. Jump to conclusions

■ To reach a judgement without adequate evidence.
"The report cautioned against jumping to conclusions prematurely."

924. The jury is still out

■ The matter has not yet been decided.
"As regards the long-term consequences, the jury is still very much out."

925. Keep a civil tongue

■ To maintain polite and restrained language despite provocation.
"She struggled to keep a civil tongue during the contentious debate."

926. Keep a lid on

■ To maintain control over a situation or to prevent it from becoming public.
"The management attempted to keep a lid on the growing crisis."

927. Keep a low profile

■ To avoid attracting attention.
"During the controversy, the director wisely kept a low profile."

928. Keep a stiff upper lip

■ To maintain composure and self-control in adversity.
"In the tradition of his culture, he kept a stiff upper lip throughout the ordeal."

929. Keep a watchful eye on

■ To observe something carefully and continuously.
"The regulator undertook to keep a watchful eye on compliance."

930. Keep a weather eye on

■ To watch something carefully for potential problems.
"The board was advised to keep a weather eye on developments overseas."

SET 94 · Idioms 931–940

931. Keep at bay

■ To prevent something from coming near or affecting one.
"Strict border controls were intended to keep the disease at bay."

932. Keep body and soul together

■ To earn just enough money to survive.
"During the lean years, he barely kept body and soul together."

933. Keep both oars in the water

■ To remain alert and in control of a situation.
"A good chairman keeps both oars in the water at all times."

934. Keep faith with

■ To remain faithful to a commitment or principle.
"The administration was determined to keep faith with its manifesto pledges."

935. Keep in the loop

■ To ensure someone is kept informed about relevant developments.
"The director insisted on being kept in the loop throughout the negotiations."

936. Keep one's counsel

■ To refrain from sharing one's opinions; to remain discreet.
"A wise diplomat learns early to keep one's counsel."

937. Keep one's distance

■ To remain physically or emotionally separate from someone or something.
"He thought it prudent to keep his distance from the controversy."

938. Keep one's eye on the ball

■ To remain focused on the primary objective.
"Despite distractions, she kept her eye on the ball throughout."

939. Keep one's head above water

■ To manage just adequately, especially financially.
"The charity struggled to keep its head above water during the recession."

940. Keep one's nose to the grindstone

■ To work hard and steadily without stopping.
"He kept his nose to the grindstone throughout the long project."

SET 95 · Idioms 941–950

941. Keep one's options open

■ To avoid committing oneself to a single course of action.

"The negotiators kept their options open until the very last session."

942. Keep one's own counsel

■ To refrain from revealing one's thoughts or plans.

"A prudent negotiator always keeps their own counsel."

943. Keep one's powder dry

■ To remain cautious and ready for action.

"The opposition kept their powder dry, reserving their strongest arguments."

944. Keep one's wits about one

■ To remain alert and mentally prepared.

"In such circumstances, it is essential to keep one's wits about one."

945. Keep open house

■ To offer a welcome to all at any time.

"The professor was known for keeping open house to any student who wished to discuss ideas."

946. Keep pace with

■ To develop or progress at the same rate as.

"The legislation struggled to keep pace with technological development."

947. Keep pace with change

■ To develop and adapt at the same rate as the environment.

"The legislation failed to keep pace with the speed of technological change."

948. Keep someone at arm's length

■ To avoid becoming too close or involved with someone.

"The committee kept the interested parties at arm's length."

949. Keep someone posted

■ To inform someone regularly of developments.

"He promised to keep the board fully posted on progress."

950. Keep something under wraps

■ To keep something secret.

"Details of the new product were kept carefully under wraps."

SET 96 · Idioms 951–960

951. Keep tabs on

■ To monitor someone or something closely.

"The auditors were appointed to keep tabs on expenditure."

952. Keep the ball rolling

■ To maintain momentum in an activity.

"Regular meetings were held to keep the ball rolling."

953. Keep the wolf from the door

■ To earn enough to avoid poverty or hunger.

"He worked two jobs simply to keep the wolf from the door."

954. Keep up appearances

■ To maintain an outward impression of prosperity or normality.

"Despite financial difficulties, the family kept up appearances."

955. Kill the goose that lays the golden egg

■ To destroy what has been producing profit or benefit.

"Overtaxing the industry would be killing the goose that lays the golden egg."

956. Kill two birds with one stone

■ To achieve two objectives with a single action.

"By combining the two trips, he effectively killed two birds with one stone."

957. Kith and kin

■ One's friends and relatives.

"He was supported throughout the ordeal by his kith and kin."

958. Knock into shape

■ To bring something or someone to the required standard.

"The remedial training was designed to knock performance into shape."

959. Knock on the head

■ To reject or put an end to something.

"The funding application was knocked firmly on the head by the committee."

960. Knock out of the running

■ To eliminate a candidate or competitor from consideration.

"The damaging disclosure effectively knocked him out of the running."

SET 97 · Idioms 961–970

961. Know one's onions

■ To be thoroughly knowledgeable about a subject.
"When it came to constitutional law, she certainly knew her onions."

962. Know one's place

■ To understand and accept the limits of one's position.
"The junior official needed to learn to know his place."

963. Know the ropes

■ To be thoroughly familiar with how something works.
"After a decade in the field, he knew all the ropes."

964. Labour in vain

■ To work without producing any useful result.
"Without proper data, the analysis was labour in vain."

965. A labour of Hercules

■ A task requiring enormous effort.
"Cataloguing the entire archive was a labour of Hercules."

966. A labour of love

■ Work done for pleasure rather than material gain.
"The restoration of the old library was a genuine labour of love."

967. Labour the point

■ To insist on or repeat a point excessively.
"There is no need to labour the point — the committee understands."

968. Labour under a misconception

■ To operate on the basis of a false belief.
"The committee had been labouring under a profound misconception."

969. Land in hot water

■ To find oneself in serious trouble.
"The imprudent statement landed the minister in very hot water."

970. Land on one's feet

■ To emerge from a difficult situation in a fortunate position.
"Despite the setbacks, she invariably landed on her feet."

SET 98 · Idioms 971–980

971. Lap up

■ To accept or enjoy something eagerly and uncritically.
"The audience lapped up every word of the impassioned speech."

972. The last straw

■ The final provocation that makes a situation unbearable.
"The announcement of further cuts proved the last straw."

973. The law of diminishing returns

■ A point at which further investment yields progressively less benefit.
"The project had clearly reached the law of diminishing returns."

974. The law of unintended consequences

■ The principle that actions often produce unexpected and unwanted results.
"The reform illustrated the law of unintended consequences in full measure."

975. Lay bare

■ To expose or reveal something fully.
"The report laid bare the full extent of the institutional failures."

976. Lay claim to

■ To assert a right or ownership of something.
"She laid claim to the originality of the methodology."

977. Lay down one's arms

■ To submit or surrender; to stop fighting.
"After months of legal action, the opposing party laid down its arms."

978. Lay down the gauntlet

■ To issue a challenge or provocation.
"By publishing the open letter, he laid down the gauntlet to the administration."

979. Lay down the law

■ To state one's rules authoritatively and dogmatically.
"The editor laid down the law regarding standards of accuracy."

980. Lay low

■ To remain inconspicuous during a difficult period.
"Advised by his counsel, he lay low for several weeks."

SET 99 · Idioms 981–990

981. Lay the groundwork

■ To do the necessary preparatory work.

"Years of patient diplomacy laid the groundwork for the eventual settlement."

982. Lead a charmed life

■ To be consistently fortunate, as though protected from misfortune.

"The diplomat had led a charmed life in the most dangerous postings."

983. Lead someone by the nose

■ To control someone completely and effortlessly.

"He was led entirely by the nose by his more experienced colleagues."

984. Lead someone up the garden path

■ To deceive someone by giving false impressions.

"The misleading prospectus led investors up the garden path."

985. Lead the charge

■ To be at the forefront of a movement or effort.

"She led the charge for greater accountability."

986. Lean heavily on

■ To rely to a considerable degree upon.

"The argument leaned heavily on a single disputed source."

987. A leap in the dark

■ An action taken without knowing the consequences.

"Investing all funds in an untested venture is a leap in the dark."

988. Learn the hard way

■ To gain knowledge only after making costly mistakes.

"He learned the hard way that thoroughness was non-negotiable."

989. Leave a bitter taste

■ To create a lasting negative impression.

"The manner in which the decision was communicated left a bitter taste."

990. Leave a legacy

■ To create something of lasting value that outlives one.

"She hoped to leave a legacy of genuine institutional reform."

SET 100 · Idioms 991–1000

991. Leave a lot to be desired

■ To be considerably below an acceptable standard.

"The report's methodology left a great deal to be desired."

992. Leave an indelible mark

■ To create a lasting and powerful impression.

"The experience left an indelible mark on the institution."

993. Leave much to be desired

■ To be considerably below an adequate standard.

"The quality of the evidence presented left much to be desired."

994. Leave no room for doubt

■ To make something absolutely clear.

"The findings left absolutely no room for doubt."

995. Leave no stone unturned

■ To try every possible course of action.

"The investigators left no stone unturned in their search for evidence."

996. Leave one's mark on

■ To make a lasting impression on something.

"She left an indelible mark on the institution she had served for thirty years."

997. Leave room for

■ To allow for the possibility of something.

"The agreement left room for future revision."

998. Leave someone in the lurch

■ To abandon someone in a difficult situation.

"He left his partners in the lurch by withdrawing abruptly."

999. Leave someone to their own devices

■ To allow someone to manage without interference.

"Left to his own devices, the researcher produced outstanding work."

1000. Lend an ear

■ To listen attentively and sympathetically.

"She was always willing to lend a patient ear to her colleagues' concerns."

SET 101 · Idioms 1001–1010

1001. Lend authority to

■ To add credibility or weight to something.
"The endorsement of the academy lent considerable authority to the claim."

1002. Lend colour to

■ To make something seem more credible or vivid.
"New testimony lent considerable colour to the existing account."

1003. Lend itself to

■ To be particularly suited to a particular interpretation or use.
"The flexible wording lent itself to a variety of interpretations."

1004. Lend one's name to

■ To give one's public support or endorsement to something.
"He was reluctant to lend his name to a cause he did not fully support."

1005. Lend support to

■ To provide justification or backing for.
"The new data lent strong support to the original hypothesis."

1006. Lend weight to

■ To add force or credibility to an argument.
"The new findings lent additional weight to the existing concerns."

1007. The length and breadth of

■ Throughout the entire extent of something.
"The reforms were felt throughout the length and breadth of the organisation."

1008. The lesser of two evils

■ The less harmful of two unpleasant options.
"Many regarded the compromise as the lesser of two evils."

1009. Let bygones be bygones

■ To forgive past disagreements and cease to hold grudges.
"Both parties agreed to let bygones be bygones and begin afresh."

1010. Let sleeping dogs lie

■ To avoid raising old problems or quarrels.
"He wisely decided to let sleeping dogs lie rather than reopen the debate."

SET 102 · Idioms 1011–1020

1011. Let the cat out of the bag

■ To reveal a secret inadvertently.
"An indiscreet remark let the cat out of the bag before the announcement."

1012. Let the facts speak for themselves

■ To present evidence without editorial comment, allowing it to make its own impact.
"Rather than argue the point, she let the facts speak for themselves."

1013. Let the side down

■ To fail one's colleagues or supporters by performing below expectations.
"The poor preparation let the entire team down."

1014. Level the playing field

■ To make conditions fair and equal for all.
"The new regulations were intended to level the playing field."

1015. Level with someone

■ To be honest and direct with someone.
"She levelled with the committee and admitted the full extent of the problem."

1016. Lie at the heart of

■ To be the central or most important element of something.
"The question of accountability lies at the very heart of the matter."

1017. Lie at the root of

■ To be the fundamental cause of something.
"Weak governance lay at the root of most of the identified failures."

1018. Light at the end of the tunnel

■ A sign of hope after a long and difficult period.
"After months of adversity, there was finally light at the end of the tunnel."

1019. Light the fuse

■ To trigger a volatile or explosive chain of events.
"The leaked document lit the fuse on a prolonged public controversy."

1020. Light the touch paper

■ To initiate something that may have explosive consequences.
"The publication lit the touch paper on a controversy that lasted years."

SET 103 · Idioms 1021–1030

1021. A lion's share

■ The largest portion of something.

"The lion's share of the funding went to the flagship institutions."

1022. Live and learn

■ To acquire wisdom through experience and mistakes.

"He had misjudged the situation, but one must live and learn."

1023. Live by one's principles

■ To conduct oneself consistently in accordance with one's convictions.

"He was a man who genuinely lived by his principles."

1024. Live from hand to mouth

■ To have barely enough money to survive.

"After the business failed, the family lived from hand to mouth for years."

1025. Live up to

■ To meet the expectations associated with something.

"The sequel failed to live up to the expectations raised by the original."

1026. A loaded question

■ A question that contains a hidden or unfair assumption.

"The interviewer's loaded question put the candidate in a difficult position."

1027. Lock horns

■ To become engaged in conflict or dispute.

"The two factions locked horns over the question of party leadership."

1028. Lock, stock, and barrel

■ Completely; including everything.

"The entire archive, lock, stock, and barrel, was transferred to the university."

1029. The long and the short of it

■ The essential or fundamental point of something.

"The long and the short of it was that the proposal was unaffordable."

1030. Long in the tooth

■ Rather old; having been in service for a long time.

"His equipment was somewhat long in the tooth but still serviceable."

SET 104 · Idioms 1031–1040

1031. Look a gift horse in the mouth

■ To be ungrateful for a gift or favour.

"One should not look a gift horse in the mouth when generous funding is offered."

1032. Look before one leaps

■ To consider consequences carefully before acting.

"Sound judgement requires that one look before one leaps."

1033. Look daggers at someone

■ To glare at someone with great anger or hostility.

"She looked daggers at him when he contradicted her in public."

1034. Look to the future

■ To focus on what lies ahead rather than dwelling on the past.

"It was time to look to the future and move beyond the dispute."

1035. Look upon with favour

■ To regard with approval.

"The proposal was looked upon with favour by the majority of the panel."

1036. Lose face

■ To suffer a loss of dignity, prestige, or reputation.

"The decision was reversed in a way that allowed both parties to avoid losing face."

1037. Lose ground to

■ To fall behind a competitor or opposing force.

"The incumbent was rapidly losing ground to the challenger."

1038. Lose heart

■ To become disheartened or discouraged.

"Despite repeated setbacks, the team refused to lose heart."

1039. Lose one's touch

■ To lose a previously reliable skill or ability.

"After years away, he feared he had lost his touch."

1040. Lose sight of

■ To forget or cease to consider something important.

"Under the pressure of events, the committee lost sight of its core purpose."

SET 105 · Idioms 1041–1050

1041. A lost cause

■ An undertaking with no prospect of success.
"Several advisers had privately concluded the campaign was a lost cause."

1042. Make a case for

■ To present arguments in support of something.
"The paper made a compelling case for structural reform."

1043. Make a clean breast of

■ To confess everything fully and honestly.
"Under pressure from investigators, he made a clean breast of the matter."

1044. Make a compelling case

■ To argue so persuasively that the conclusion is difficult to resist.
"The report made a compelling case for immediate legislative action."

1045. Make a distinction between

■ To identify and articulate the difference between two things.
"It is essential to make a clear distinction between causation and correlation."

1046. Make a mountain out of a molehill

■ To exaggerate a trivial problem.
"The press made a mountain out of a molehill over a minor procedural error."

1047. Make a pile

■ To make a large amount of money.
"He had made a considerable pile before reaching forty."

1048. Make a splash

■ To attract great attention or create a strong impression.
"The publication made a considerable splash in academic circles."

1049. Make allowances for

■ To take into account particular circumstances.
"One should make allowances for the difficulties of the situation."

1050. Make amends for

■ To compensate or make up for a previous wrong.
"He was genuinely anxious to make amends for his earlier conduct."

SET 106 · Idioms 1051–1060

1051. Make bricks without straw

■ To work without the necessary materials or resources.
"Without data or funding, the team was making bricks without straw."

1052. Make capital out of

■ To exploit something for one's own advantage.
"The opposition was quick to make political capital out of the disclosure."

1053. Make common cause

■ To work together with others towards a shared objective.
"The two organisations made common cause in defence of press freedom."

1054. Make concessions

■ To yield something in order to reach an agreement.
"Both parties were obliged to make significant concessions."

1055. Make ducks and drakes of

■ To waste recklessly.
"He had made ducks and drakes of his inheritance."

1056. Make ends meet

■ To earn just enough to cover one's expenses.
"With costs rising, many families struggled to make ends meet."

1057. Make hay while the sun shines

■ To take advantage of favourable conditions.
"The favourable climate provided an opportunity to make hay while the sun shone."

1058. Make head or tail of

■ To understand or find meaning in something.
"The committee could make no head or tail of the confusing submission."

1059. Make inroads

■ To make progress; to advance into new territory.
"The new treatment was beginning to make significant inroads into the problem."

1060. Make light of

■ To treat something serious as trivial.
"He was inclined to make light of difficulties that others found daunting."

SET 107 · Idioms 1061–1070

1061. Make no bones about

■ To say plainly without hesitation.

"She made no bones about her opposition to the proposal."

1062. Make no secret of

■ To be openly transparent about something.

"She made no secret of her opposition to the proposed policy."

1063. Make one's mark

■ To achieve recognition or distinction.

"She had made her mark in constitutional scholarship before the age of thirty."

1064. Make one's position clear

■ To state unambiguously what one thinks or intends.

"The minister made her position absolutely clear at the opening."

1065. Make one's voice heard

■ To ensure one's opinions are known and considered.

"The consultation was designed to allow all stakeholders to make their voices heard."

1066. Make or break

■ The decisive factor in the success or failure of something.

"The forthcoming review would make or break the initiative."

1067. Make provision for

■ To take steps to ensure something is available or dealt with.

"The statute made explicit provision for such circumstances."

1068. Make sense of

■ To understand or find meaning in something.

"It took considerable time to make sense of the conflicting data."

1069. Make short work of

■ To deal with something quickly and efficiently.

"The experienced team made short work of the technical challenges."

1070. Make the best of a bad job

■ To do as well as possible in difficult circumstances.

"Unable to change the situation, the team made the best of a bad job."

SET 108 · Idioms 1071–1080

1071. Make the most of

■ To use a situation or resource to the fullest possible advantage.

"The fellowship gave her the opportunity to make the most of her abilities."

1072. A man of letters

■ A learned person devoted to literary or scholarly pursuits.

"He was universally regarded as a distinguished man of letters."

1073. A man of straw

■ A weak or easily defeated opponent; a person of no substance.

"The opposition leader was dismissed by his rivals as a man of straw."

1074. Many moons ago

■ A long time ago.

"Many moons ago, this was a prosperous and influential institution."

1075. Mark a departure from

■ To represent a significant change from previous practice.

"The ruling marked a clear departure from established precedent."

1076. Mark a turning point

■ To represent the moment when things change.

"The publication marked a genuine turning point in the discipline."

1077. Mark with distinction

■ To achieve something at an exceptionally high level.

"She completed her doctorate and marked her career with distinction."

1078. Matter of course

■ Something done as part of normal or standard procedure.

"Ethical approval was sought as a matter of course."

1079. A matter of life and death

■ A situation of the utmost urgency and seriousness.

"For the affected communities, clean water was a matter of life and death."

1080. A matter of principle

■ An issue decided by moral conviction rather than practical consideration.

"She refused on grounds that were entirely a matter of principle."

SET 109 · Idioms 1081–1090

1081. A matter of record

■ Something that is officially documented and acknowledged.
"His prior conviction was a matter of public record."

1082. Meet a need

■ To fulfil a requirement or address a deficiency.
"The new provisions met a need that had long gone unaddressed."

1083. Meet halfway

■ To make a compromise with another person.
"Progress required both sides to meet each other halfway."

1084. Meet one's match

■ To encounter someone equal or superior in ability.
"The formidable barrister finally met his match."

1085. Meet one's obligations

■ To fulfil the duties or commitments one has undertaken.
"The organisation was expected to meet its obligations in full."

1086. Meet one's Waterloo

■ To suffer a decisive defeat.
"After years of dominance, the incumbent finally met his Waterloo."

1087. Meet the standard

■ To reach the required level of quality or performance.
"The submission failed to meet the required standard."

1088. A meeting of minds

■ An agreement or understanding between people after thoughtful discussion.
"The two scholars achieved a genuine meeting of minds on the matter."

1089. Merit serious consideration

■ To deserve to be taken seriously and examined carefully.
"The proposal merited far more serious consideration than it received."

1090. Middle ground

■ A position intermediate between two extremes.
"An acceptable resolution lay on the middle ground between the two positions."

SET 110 · Idioms 1091–1100

1091. Milk and honey

■ A situation of great prosperity and abundance.
"The economic boom years were remembered as a period of milk and honey."

1092. Mind one's p's and q's

■ To be careful about one's manners and behaviour.
"He was careful to mind his p's and q's at the formal reception."

1093. Miss the boat

■ To fail to take advantage of an opportunity.
"By hesitating too long, the company had missed the boat."

1094. Miss the mark

■ To fail to achieve the intended effect or standard.
"His intervention, though well-intentioned, missed the mark entirely."

1095. A mixed bag

■ A collection of different things or people of varying quality.
"The responses to the consultation were a decidedly mixed bag."

1096. A mixed blessing

■ Something with both advantages and disadvantages.
"Fame is invariably something of a mixed blessing."

1097. The moment of truth

■ The time when reality becomes evident.
"The presentation was the moment of truth for the entire project."

1098. A moot point

■ A debatable or purely theoretical question.
"Whether the earlier decision was correct remains a moot point."

1099. Move heaven and earth

■ To do everything possible to achieve something.
"She moved heaven and earth to ensure the exhibition opened on time."

1100. Move in rarefied circles

■ To associate with people of particularly high social or intellectual status.
"The position brought her into contact with some quite rarefied circles."

SET 111 · Idioms 1101–1110

1101. Move the goalposts

■ To change the terms of an agreement unfairly.
"Frustration grew as the client repeatedly moved the goalposts."

1102. Move the needle

■ To produce a meaningful change in a situation.
"After months of effort, the initiative was finally beginning to move the needle."

1103. A moving target

■ A goal or standard that keeps changing, making it difficult to achieve.
"The requirements proved a moving target throughout the project."

1104. Muddy the waters

■ To make a situation more confusing or difficult.
"Additional conflicting testimony merely muddled the waters."

1105. A mug's game

■ An activity that is foolish or unlikely to produce any benefit.
"Speculating in that market without inside knowledge was a mug's game."

1106. Mull over

■ To think carefully and slowly about something.
"He mulled over the offer for several days before responding."

1107. A nail in the coffin

■ An event contributing decisively to failure.
"The damning audit was another nail in the coffin of his career."

1108. Nail one's colours to the mast

■ To declare one's position publicly and firmly.
"By resigning, he nailed his colours to the mast on the question of principle."

1109. A nail-biting finish

■ A conclusion that is extremely tense and uncertain.
"The vote produced a nail-biting finish that kept everyone on edge."

1110. A narrow escape

■ A situation where disaster was narrowly avoided.
"The rescue party arrived just in time — a very narrow escape."

SET 112 · Idioms 1111–1120

1111. Navigate between Scylla and Charybdis

■ To steer a careful course between two equally dangerous extremes.
"The mediator had to navigate between Scylla and Charybdis."

1112. Navigate the pitfalls

■ To successfully avoid the dangers or difficulties of a situation.
"Experience helped him navigate the many pitfalls of the process."

1113. A necessary evil

■ Something undesirable but unavoidable.
"Taxation is widely regarded as a necessary evil in any functioning society."

1114. A needle in a haystack

■ Something extremely difficult or impossible to find.
"Finding the relevant clause was like looking for a needle in a haystack."

1115. Neither fish nor fowl

■ Belonging to no clear or definable category.
"The hybrid proposal was neither fish nor fowl."

1116. Never say die

■ To continue to persevere in the face of difficulty.
"The never-say-die spirit of the rescue team was widely admired."

1117. A nine days' wonder

■ Something that attracts brief interest then is forgotten.
"The scandal proved a nine days' wonder and was quickly forgotten."

1118. Nip in the bud

■ To stop something at an early stage before it can develop further.
"The disciplinary action nipped the problem in the bud."

1119. No holds barred

■ Without any restrictions whatsoever.
"The investigation was to proceed no holds barred."

1120. No laughing matter

■ A serious situation not to be treated lightly.
"The implications for public safety were no laughing matter."

SET 113 · Idioms 1121–1130

1121. No smoke without fire

■ Where there are signs of a problem, it usually exists.
"The persistent rumours were dismissed, but most believed no smoke without fire."

1122. Not a leg to stand on

■ Having no basis whatsoever for one's argument or case.
"Without any corroborating evidence, the case had not a leg to stand on."

1123. Not be in a position to

■ To be unable to do something because of constraints.
"The committee was not in a position to make a final decision without further evidence."

1124. Not by a long shot

■ Not at all; by a very considerable margin.
"The proposed settlement was not, by a long shot, adequate compensation."

1125. Not mince one's words

■ To speak directly and without softening one's language.
"She did not mince her words in her review of the minister's record."

1126. Not one's cup of tea

■ Not to one's taste or preference.
"Theoretical speculation was not his cup of tea; he preferred empirical study."

1127. Not pull one's punches

■ To express oneself without restraint or softening.
"The committee did not pull its punches in assessing the management's performance."

1128. Not ring true

■ To seem unconvincing or inauthentic.
"His explanation did not ring entirely true."

1129. Not suffer fools gladly

■ To be impatient with those perceived as unintelligent.
"She did not suffer fools gladly and made her expectations clear."

1130. Not to be sneezed at

■ Not to be dismissed as unimportant.
"An offer of that magnitude is not to be sneezed at."

SET 114 · Idioms 1131–1140

1131. Not worth a dime

■ Of no value whatsoever; worthless.
"Without supporting evidence, his claim was not worth a dime."

1132. Not worth the candle

■ Not worth the effort or expense.
"Given the meagre returns, the whole venture was not worth the candle."

1133. Note with concern

■ To observe and record something that is viewed with anxiety.
"The committee noted with concern the deterioration in standards."

1134. Nothing short of

■ Nothing less than; equivalent to.
"The achievement was nothing short of remarkable."

1135. Nothing to write home about

■ Unremarkable; not noteworthy.
"The performance was competent but nothing to write home about."

1136. Nothing ventured, nothing gained

■ No progress can be made without taking some risk.
"The bold decision reflected the principle that nothing ventured, nothing gained."

1137. Now and again

■ Occasionally; from time to time.
"He still visited the old school now and again."

1138. Now or never

■ A final opportunity that will not recur.
"The chairman declared that this was a now-or-never moment for reform."

1139. Object in principle

■ To oppose something on grounds of fundamental belief.
"Several members objected in principle to any dilution of the requirements."

1140. Occupy the moral high ground

■ To take a position regarded as ethically superior.
"The opposition sought to occupy the moral high ground on the issue."

SET 115 · Idioms 1141–1150

1141. Of note

- Worthy of attention; distinguished.
"Several critics of note contributed to the anthology."

1142. Of one piece with

- Consistent with or forming part of something larger.
"The latest development was of one piece with a broader pattern."

1143. Of paramount importance

- Of the highest possible importance.
"Accuracy is of paramount importance in scholarly writing."

1144. Off and on

- Intermittently; not continuously.
"The two sides had been in contact off and on for several years."

1145. Off beam

- Incorrect or mistaken.
"His initial estimate was entirely off beam."

1146. Off one's guard

- In an unprepared state, vulnerable to criticism or attack.
"The sudden question caught the minister off guard."

1147. Off the beaten track

- In an isolated or unfamiliar location; unconventional.
"The research took the scholar well off the beaten track."

1148. Off the cuff

- Done without preparation; impromptu.
"His off-the-cuff remarks were both witty and insightful."

1149. Off the hook

- Released from responsibility or an obligation.
"He was relieved to be let off the hook by the committee's findings."

1150. Off the record

- Not for publication; in confidence.
"Speaking off the record, the official confirmed the rumours."

SET 116 · Idioms 1151–1160

1151. Oil and water

- Two things or people that do not work well together.
"Their personalities were oil and water — the collaboration was doomed."

1152. An oily tongue

- Flattering but insincere or manipulative speech.
"His oily tongue won him favour at court, though few trusted his sincerity."

1153. On a collision course

- Heading towards an inevitable conflict or disaster.
"The two policies were on a collision course."

1154. On a firm footing

- In a secure and stable position.
"The organisation was now on a far firmer footing than before."

1155. On a knife edge

- In an extremely uncertain or precarious situation.
"The outcome remained on a knife edge until the final count."

1156. On a par with

- Equal to; comparable in quality or importance.
"His latest essay is on a par with his most celebrated earlier work."

1157. On a shoestring

- With very limited financial resources.
"The exhibition was produced on a shoestring but received critical acclaim."

1158. On all fronts

- In every aspect or direction simultaneously.
"The reform programme advanced on all fronts."

1159. On an equal footing

- In a position of equal status or opportunity.
"The new arrangements placed all competitors on an equal footing."

1160. On an even keel

- In a stable and balanced state.
"After a turbulent year, the organisation was finally on an even keel."

SET 117 · Idioms 1161–1170

1161. On balance

■ Taking everything into consideration.

"On balance, the benefits of the policy outweigh its limitations."

1162. On borrowed time

■ Continuing longer than was expected or than is safe.

"The regime was widely considered to be on borrowed time."

1163. On careful reflection

■ After having thought about something thoroughly.

"On careful reflection, the committee revised its initial position."

1164. On closer inspection

■ Upon more careful examination.

"On closer inspection, several inconsistencies became apparent."

1165. On cloud nine

■ In a state of extreme happiness.

"Following the announcement, the team was on cloud nine."

1166. On every count

■ In every respect; by every measure.

"The plan was found to be deficient on every count."

1167. On firm ground

■ In a secure position with solid justification.

"She was on firm ground legally when she made the decision."

1168. On good authority

■ From a reliable and credible source.

"He had it on good authority that the decision had already been made."

1169. On ice

■ Postponed or delayed.

"Plans for the expansion were put on ice pending the economic review."

1170. On one's beam ends

■ In a difficult or desperate situation.

"With funds exhausted, the project was on its beam ends."

SET 118 · Idioms 1171–1180

1171. On one's doorstep

■ Very close; in the immediate vicinity.

"The problem was not a distant one — it was on their very doorstep."

1172. On one's guard

■ Vigilant and prepared for potential danger or criticism.

"In such a charged atmosphere, one had to be constantly on one's guard."

1173. On one's high horse

■ Behaving in an arrogant or self-righteous manner.

"There was no need for him to get on his high horse about a minor oversight."

1174. On one's last legs

■ Nearly exhausted; close to complete failure.

"The old institution was on its last legs when the endowment was secured."

1175. On one's mettle

■ Prompted to demonstrate one's best abilities.

"The challenging brief put the entire team on its mettle."

1176. On one's own terms

■ In accordance with one's own requirements or conditions.

"She negotiated the settlement entirely on her own terms."

1177. On pins and needles

■ In a state of nervous anticipation or tension.

"The audience was on pins and needles throughout the closing argument."

1178. On reflection

■ After further thought.

"On reflection, his initial response had been ill-considered."

1179. On the agenda

■ Listed as a topic for discussion at a meeting.

"The question of governance was placed firmly on the agenda."

1180. On the assumption that

■ Proceeding on the basis that something is true.

"The plan was prepared on the assumption that funding would be secured."

SET 119 · Idioms 1181–1190

1181. On the back foot

■ At a disadvantage; in a defensive position.

"The government was immediately on the back foot following the report."

1182. On the basis of evidence

■ Taking as one's starting point the available evidence.

"All conclusions should be drawn on the basis of evidence."

1183. On the brink of

■ Very close to; on the verge of.

"The organisation was on the very brink of collapse."

1184. On the cards

■ Very likely to happen.

"A significant reshuffle was widely seen as on the cards."

1185. On the crest of a wave

■ At the height of success or popularity.

"The young novelist was on the crest of a wave after her debut."

1186. On the dot

■ Exactly on time.

"The delegation arrived on the dot at nine o'clock."

1187. On the face of it

■ Judging by appearances; superficially.

"On the face of it, the proposal appeared entirely reasonable."

1188. On the fence

■ Remaining neutral or uncommitted on a controversial issue.

"The editorial board remained frustratingly on the fence."

1189. On the nail

■ Immediately; without delay.

"He was expected to pay on the nail."

1190. On the off chance

■ Hoping for a possible but unlikely outcome.

"He applied on the off chance that the position was still available."

SET 120 · Idioms 1191–1200

1191. On the right side of history

■ Acting in accordance with what future judgement will regard as just.

"She was determined to be on the right side of history."

1192. On the right track

■ Pursuing the correct approach or course of action.

"The early results suggested the team was on the right track."

1193. On the rocks

■ In serious difficulty or close to failure.

"Their partnership was clearly on the rocks."

1194. On the ropes

■ In severe difficulty; close to defeat.

"After the ruling, the defence case was effectively on the ropes."

1195. On the spur of the moment

■ Impulsively, without prior planning.

"The decision was made on the spur of the moment and poorly considered."

1196. On the stocks

■ In preparation or under construction.

"Several new initiatives were on the stocks."

1197. On the strength of

■ Based on; relying on.

"She was appointed on the strength of her international reputation."

1198. On the verge of

■ Very close to a particular state or action.

"The country was on the verge of economic collapse."

1199. On the wane

■ Declining in strength, power, or importance.

"The influence of the traditional press was clearly on the wane."

1200. On the warpath

■ In an aggressively confrontational mood.

"After the audit, the finance director was on the warpath."

SET 121 · Idioms 1201–1210

1201. On the wrong footing

■ Having started a process poorly or inauspiciously.
"The summit got off on entirely the wrong footing from the outset."

1202. On the wrong side of history

■ Taking a position that future opinion will regard as indefensible.
"Those who opposed the reforms risked ending up on the wrong side of history."

1203. On thin ice

■ In a risky or precarious situation.
"By disclosing that information, she was on very thin ice."

1204. On thorns

■ In a state of nervous anxiety.
"He was visibly on thorns awaiting the decision."

1205. Once and again

■ Repeatedly; time after time.
"She once and again brought the subject back to the central point."

1206. Once and for all

■ Finally and conclusively.
"The committee resolved the matter once and for all."

1207. Once in a blue moon

■ Very rarely.
"Such clarity of reasoning appears only once in a blue moon."

1208. One swallow doesn't make a summer

■ A single instance is not sufficient evidence of a general trend.
"One good result is encouraging, but one swallow does not make a summer."

1209. One's hands are tied

■ To be prevented from acting freely by constraints or obligations.
"The regulator acknowledged the problem but explained that her hands were tied."

1210. Open a can of worms

■ To create a situation leading to numerous unforeseen problems.
"The enquiry threatened to open an entire can of worms."

SET 122 · Idioms 1211–1220

1211. An open book

■ A person or matter easily understood; nothing concealed.
"She kept no secrets — her life was an open book."

1212. Open Pandora's box

■ To initiate a process that releases many unforeseen problems.
"The inquiry opened a veritable Pandora's box."

1213. Open the floodgates

■ To allow a large and uncontrollable flow of something.
"The ruling threatened to open the floodgates to litigation."

1214. Open to scrutiny

■ Liable to be closely and critically examined.
"Every aspect of the expenditure must be open to proper scrutiny."

1215. An open verdict

■ A conclusion that leaves the question undecided.
"The inquest returned an open verdict."

1216. An open-and-shut case

■ A matter whose outcome is certain beyond any reasonable doubt.
"With such overwhelming evidence, it was an open-and-shut case."

1217. Operate in a vacuum

■ To function without regard to the broader context or reality.
"No policy can be designed in isolation — no institution operates in a vacuum."

1218. Operate within constraints

■ To function while subject to limiting conditions.
"All public bodies must operate within the constraints of the law."

1219. The order of the day

■ What is most common or required at a particular time.
"Austerity was the order of the day following the financial crisis."

1220. Out and away

■ By far; without comparison.
"She was out and away the most qualified candidate."

SET 123 · Idioms 1221–1230

1221. Out and out

■ Complete and without qualification.

"He was an out-and-out opponent of the measure."

1222. Out of all proportion

■ Far exceeding what is reasonable or appropriate.

"The response was widely criticised as out of all proportion to the offence."

1223. Out of joint

■ Not working properly; also, out of harmony.

"The timing was out of joint from the very beginning."

1224. Out of key

■ Not in harmony or agreement.

"His contribution was entirely out of key with the spirit of the occasion."

1225. Out of line

■ Behaving improperly or disrespectfully.

"His remarks were completely out of line."

1226. Out of one's element

■ In an unfamiliar or uncomfortable situation.

"In such technical company, he was entirely out of his element."

1227. Out of place

■ Inappropriate; inconsistent with the surrounding context.

"The flippant remark seemed entirely out of place in such solemn proceedings."

1228. Out of sorts

■ Unwell or in low spirits.

"She seemed out of sorts for several days after the announcement."

1229. Out of step with

■ In disagreement with or inconsistent with something.

"The policy was clearly out of step with the prevailing public mood."

1230. Out of the blue

■ Suddenly and unexpectedly.

"The resignation came entirely out of the blue."

SET 124 · Idioms 1231–1240

1231. Out of the clear blue sky

■ Without warning; completely unexpectedly.

"The announcement came out of the clear blue sky."

1232. Out of the question

■ Not possible or not allowed.

"A further extension of the deadline was entirely out of the question."

1233. Out of the woods

■ Out of danger or difficulty.

"The patient was recovering but was not yet fully out of the woods."

1234. Over a barrel

■ In a position of having no alternative or choice.

"With no other options, the company was over a barrel."

1235. Over and above

■ In addition to.

"Over and above the fee, there were considerable incidental expenses."

1236. Over and over

■ Repeatedly.

"He went over and over the figures before he was satisfied."

1237. Over head and ears

■ Deeply involved in something.

"She was over head and ears in committee work."

1238. Over the moon

■ Extremely happy and delighted.

"The team was over the moon at the result."

1239. Overplay one's hand

■ To act with excessive confidence and risk losing everything.

"By demanding too much, the union overplayed its hand."

1240. Overstate one's case

■ To argue more strongly than the evidence justifies.

"The report was criticised for overstating its case."

SET 125 · Idioms 1241–1250

1241. Pack a punch

■ To be especially powerful or effective.
"The brief but incisive conclusion packed a considerable punch."

1242. Paddle one's own canoe

■ To act independently; to be self-reliant.
"He preferred to paddle his own canoe rather than rely on patronage."

1243. Paint a rosy picture

■ To describe a situation in an overly optimistic way.
"The preliminary report painted a rosy picture that later proved misleading."

1244. Paint with a broad brush

■ To describe in general terms, ignoring important detail.
"The report painted with an unnecessarily broad brush."

1245. A paper tiger

■ Something that appears threatening but is in fact weak or ineffectual.
"The committee's authority proved to be a paper tiger."

1246. Part and parcel

■ An essential or fundamental element of something.
"Uncertainty is part and parcel of the academic enterprise."

1247. A parting shot

■ A final cutting remark made when leaving.
"His parting shot as he resigned stung more than anything he had said before."

1248. Pay back in the same coin

■ To respond to someone's behaviour with equivalent conduct.
"She was disinclined to pay back rudeness in the same coin."

1249. Pay dividends

■ To produce beneficial results or rewards.
"The early investment in training paid dividends in the years that followed."

1250. Pay heed to

■ To pay attention to and take seriously.
"The warnings deserved to be paid heed to."

SET 126 · Idioms 1251–1260

1251. Pay lip service to

■ To express support without sincerely intending to act on it.
"Many paid only lip service to the implementation of the policy."

1252. Pay off old scores

■ To exact revenge for a past wrong.
"The memoir appeared designed to pay off old scores."

1253. Pay one's dues

■ To fulfil one's obligations; to earn one's position through effort.
"He had unquestionably paid his dues in the profession."

1254. Pay the piper

■ To accept the consequences of one's choices.
"Those who made irresponsible decisions must now pay the piper."

1255. Pay through the nose

■ To pay an excessively high price.
"Early adopters paid through the nose for what later became a cheap technology."

1256. Persist in the face of

■ To continue despite difficulty or opposition.
"She persisted in the face of considerable institutional resistance."

1257. Pick holes in

■ To identify faults or weaknesses in an argument or plan.
"The professor spent the seminar methodically picking holes in the paper."

1258. The pick of the basket

■ The best or most distinguished of a group.
"The four finalists were undoubtedly the pick of the basket."

1259. Pick up the threads

■ To resume something after an interruption.
"She was eager to pick up the threads of her research on returning."

1260. A piece of cake

■ Something remarkably easy to accomplish.
"After years of practice, the examination was a piece of cake."

SET 127 · Idioms 1261–1270

1261. Pin one's hopes on

■ To base all one's expectations on a particular person or thing.

"The company had pinned its hopes on a single product launch."

1262. A pious fraud

■ A deception carried out for what seems a good purpose.

"The charitable deception was condemned as a pious fraud."

1263. Place on record

■ To state formally so that something is officially noted.

"He wished to place on record his dissent from the majority view."

1264. Play a decisive role

■ To be the determining factor in an outcome.

"Her intervention played a decisive role in the final agreement."

1265. Play a waiting game

■ To avoid action in the hope that circumstances will improve.

"The opposition chose to play a waiting game until closer to the election."

1266. Play devil's advocate

■ To argue a position one may not believe, to test or explore.

"He played devil's advocate to sharpen the committee's thinking."

1267. Play ducks and drakes with

■ To waste or misuse something carelessly.

"He had played ducks and drakes with the trust that was placed in him."

1268. Play fast and loose

■ To behave dishonestly or carelessly.

"He had a history of playing fast and loose with the evidence."

1269. Play into someone's hands

■ To act in a way that inadvertently benefits an opponent.

"By resigning, she played directly into her opponents' hands."

1270. Play one's cards right

■ To make the most of one's opportunities with good judgement.

"If she played her cards right, the promotion was well within reach."

SET 128 · Idioms 1271–1280

1271. Play second fiddle

■ To occupy a subordinate role.

"He was unwilling to play second fiddle to a less experienced colleague."

1272. Play to one's strengths

■ To take advantage of one's particular abilities.

"The campaign was designed to play to the candidate's considerable strengths."

1273. Plot a course

■ To determine and follow a carefully planned direction.

"The new management team needed to plot a clear course for the institution."

1274. Plough a lonely furrow

■ To pursue a course without companions or support.

"He ploughed a lonely furrow in his advocacy of the unpopular position."

1275. Plough the sand

■ To waste effort on something useless.

"Without proper support, all the effort was ploughing the sand."

1276. Plumb the depths

■ To experience the very lowest point of something.

"The investigation plumbed the depths of institutional corruption."

1277. Pocket an insult

■ To accept an insult without protest.

"He pocketed the insult and waited for a more opportune moment to respond."

1278. Point of departure

■ The starting point or basis for an argument or investigation.

"The data served as the point of departure for the entire analysis."

1279. Poison someone's ears

■ To turn someone against another through malicious talk.

"She had been busy poisoning the director's ears against her colleague."

1280. A poisoned chalice

■ Something apparently attractive but in fact bringing trouble or misfortune.

"The prestigious appointment turned out to be a poisoned chalice."

SET 129 · Idioms 1281–1290

1281. Pomp and show

■ Display of grandeur and ceremony; ostentation.
"The inauguration involved considerable pomp and show."

1282. A portent of things to come

■ An early sign of what will happen in the future.
"The small but vocal protest was a portent of things to come."

1283. The pot calling the kettle black

■ Criticising someone for a fault one also possesses.
"His complaint about dishonesty was the pot calling the kettle black."

1284. Pour forth

■ To produce a large quantity of something continuously.
"The press continued to pour forth speculation in the absence of official comment."

1285. Pour oil on troubled waters

■ To take action to calm a dispute.
"The mediator attempted to pour oil on troubled waters."

1286. Pour scorn on

■ To express strong disdain or contempt.
"The critics poured considerable scorn on the government's response."

1287. Present a united front

■ To appear to be in agreement when facing others.
"Despite internal divisions, the leadership presented a united front."

1288. Press ahead

■ To continue with a course of action with determination.
"Despite the opposition, the authorities pressed ahead with the plans."

1289. Press home an advantage

■ To make the most of a favourable situation.
"The discovery gave them an opening which they pressed home with vigour."

1290. Press one's advantage

■ To exploit a favourable situation vigorously.
"Having secured the concession, the negotiators pressed their advantage."

SET 130 · Idioms 1291–1300

1291. Prevail upon

■ To successfully persuade someone to do something.
"She was finally prevailed upon to reconsider her resignation."

1292. Probe beneath the surface

■ To investigate more deeply than the obvious facts.
"The best investigative journalism probes beneath the surface."

1293. Proceed with caution

■ To act carefully and with restraint, aware of potential risks.
"In such a politically sensitive area, it was advisable to proceed with caution."

1294. Proffer an explanation

■ To offer an explanation.
"No satisfactory explanation was proffered by the defendants."

1295. The proof is in the pudding

■ The true value of something can only be judged by putting it to use.
"As regards the new policy, the proof would be in the pudding."

1296. The pros and cons

■ The advantages and disadvantages.
"The committee carefully weighed the pros and cons of the proposal."

1297. Prove its worth

■ To demonstrate its value in practice.
"The new system had yet to prove its worth under pressure."

1298. Prove one's worth

■ To demonstrate one's value or ability.
"The appointment gave her an opportunity to prove her worth."

1299. Pull a long face

■ To look sad or disappointed.
"He pulled a long face when the results were announced."

1300. Pull back from the brink

■ To draw back from a disaster or extreme action at the last moment.
"Careful diplomacy pulled the situation back from the brink."

SET 131 · Idioms 1301–1310

1301. Pull one's weight

■ To contribute one's fair share of effort.

"Every member of the team was expected to pull their weight."

1302. Pull rank

■ To use one's senior position to override others.

"He had a regrettable tendency to pull rank in any dispute."

1303. Pull someone's leg

■ To tease or joke with someone.

"She was merely pulling his leg; the deadline had not changed."

1304. Pull strings

■ To use personal influence to achieve something.

"It was widely suspected that strings had been pulled to secure the appointment."

1305. Pull the rug from under

■ To remove support suddenly and unexpectedly.

"The withdrawal of funding pulled the rug from under the entire project."

1306. Pull the wire

■ To secretly control events or people from behind the scenes.

"It was suspected that a powerful figure was pulling the wires."

1307. Pull the wool over someone's eyes

■ To deceive or delude someone.

"The auditors were not so easily deceived."

1308. Push the envelope

■ To go beyond established limits.

"The researcher was always determined to push the intellectual envelope."

1309. Put a brave face on

■ To appear cheerful despite adversity.

"She put a brave face on the disappointment."

1310. Put a gloss on

■ To present something in a more favourable light than is warranted.

"The press release attempted to put a flattering gloss on a disappointing outcome."

SET 132 · Idioms 1311–1320

1311. Put a price on

■ To ascribe a particular monetary or other value to something.

"It is difficult to put a price on the damage done to the institution's reputation."

1312. Put a spoke in someone's wheel

■ To obstruct someone's progress or plans.

"The regulatory decision put a significant spoke in the company's wheel."

1313. Put all one's eggs in one basket

■ To risk everything on a single option.

"Concentrating all investment in one sector was putting all eggs in one basket."

1314. Put in plain English

■ To express something in simple and clear language.

"He was asked to put the findings in plain English for the wider audience."

1315. Put into context

■ To consider something in relation to its surrounding circumstances.

"The figures need to be put into the proper context."

1316. Put into perspective

■ To view something in proper proportion to other things.

"The comparison put the difficulties into proper perspective."

1317. To put it plainly

■ To express something directly and without circumlocution.

"To put it plainly, the evidence was conclusive."

1318. Put one's cards on the table

■ To be completely open and candid about one's intentions.

"It was time to put all one's cards on the table."

1319. Put one's foot down

■ To take a firm stand; to insist on something.

"The board put its foot down on any further cost overruns."

1320. Put one's foot in one's mouth

■ To say something inadvertently and embarrassingly inappropriate.

"He put his foot in his mouth by mentioning the failed project."

SET 133 · Idioms 1321–1330

1321. Put one's house in order

■ To organise and manage one's affairs properly.
"The regulator insisted that the institution put its house in order."

1322. Put one's shoulder to the wheel

■ To apply oneself vigorously to a task.
"With the deadline approaching, everyone put their shoulder to the wheel."

1323. Put one's thinking cap on

■ To think carefully and creatively about a problem.
"The team was asked to put their thinking caps on and propose solutions."

1324. Put paid to

■ To bring something to a definitive end.
"The new regulations put paid to the questionable practice."

1325. Put something in perspective

■ To see something in proper proportion to other factors.
"The comparative data put the shortfall in useful perspective."

1326. Put something on ice

■ To suspend or postpone something.
"Plans for the expansion were put on ice pending the economic review."

1327. Put the cart before the horse

■ To do things in the wrong order.
"Hiring staff before securing funding was putting the cart before the horse."

1328. Put the cat among the pigeons

■ To introduce a disturbing or controversial element.
"Her proposal put the cat well and truly among the pigeons."

1329. Put the finishing touches to

■ To complete the final details of something.
"The editorial team put the finishing touches to the manuscript."

1330. Put two and two together

■ To draw a logical conclusion from available evidence.
"The investigator quickly put two and two together."

SET 134 · Idioms 1331–1340

1331. A pyrrhic victory

■ A victory won at such great cost that it is effectively a defeat.
"Winning the legal case proved a pyrrhic victory given the costs involved."

1332. Qualify one's remarks

■ To add reservations or limitations to what one has said.
"He was careful to qualify his remarks with appropriate caveats."

1333. A quantum leap

■ A sudden and dramatic advance or increase.
"The discovery represented a quantum leap in the understanding of the disease."

1334. Question the wisdom of

■ To doubt whether a particular course of action is sensible.
"Several members questioned the wisdom of proceeding so hastily."

1335. Quite apart from

■ In addition to; not even considering.
"Quite apart from the financial implications, there were serious ethical concerns."

1336. Quite the contrary

■ The opposite of what has been suggested is true.
"Far from agreeing with the proposal, he found it quite the contrary."

1337. Rack one's brains

■ To think very hard to remember or solve something.
"He racked his brains to recall the relevant precedent."

1338. Raise a dust

■ To cause a disturbance or commotion.
"The announcement raised a considerable dust in the profession."

1339. Raise a hue and cry

■ To raise a public clamour or outcry.
"The disclosure raised an immediate hue and cry in the press."

1340. Raise a red flag

■ To give a warning about a potential problem or danger.
"The irregularity in the accounts raised an immediate red flag."

SET 135 · Idioms 1341–1350

1341. Raise eyebrows

■ To cause surprise or mild disapproval.
"His appointment raised eyebrows in certain quarters."

1342. Raise one's game

■ To improve one's performance to a higher level.
"The competition forced every participant to raise their game."

1343. Raise the bar

■ To set a higher standard of excellence.
"The publication raised the bar for investigative journalism."

1344. Raise the stakes

■ To make a situation more serious or risky.
"The latest development considerably raised the stakes."

1345. The rank and file

■ The ordinary members of an organisation.
"The decision was broadly welcomed by the rank and file of the profession."

1346. Reach a consensus

■ To arrive at a general agreement.
"After prolonged deliberation, the committee reached a workable consensus."

1347. Reach an impasse

■ To arrive at a situation where no further progress can be made.
"After three days of talks, the parties had reached a complete impasse."

1348. Reach beyond one's grasp

■ To attempt something beyond one's present capacity.
"The ambition of the project reached well beyond what was achievable."

1349. Reach fever pitch

■ To attain a state of intense excitement or agitation.
"Public indignation had reached fever pitch."

1350. Read between the lines

■ To infer meaning not explicitly stated.
"A careful reader could read between the lines of the guarded press statement."

SET 136 · Idioms 1351–1360

1351. Read the room

■ To assess the mood and expectations of an audience or group.
"A skilled speaker must know how to read the room."

1352. Reap the fruits of

■ To benefit from the results of one's earlier efforts.
"They were now reaping the fruits of years of patient investment."

1353. Reap what one sows

■ To receive consequences in proportion to one's earlier actions.
"Those who had invested wisely now reaped what they had sowed."

1354. A rearguard action

■ A defensive or delaying measure to resist a losing cause.
"The opposition fought a spirited rearguard action against the legislation."

1355. Reason from evidence

■ To draw conclusions logically from available facts.
"The best scholarship reasons from evidence rather than from assumption."

1356. Recognise the limits of

■ To acknowledge what something cannot achieve.
"Good policy requires recognising the limits of legislative action."

1357. A red herring

■ A misleading clue intended to divert attention.
"The alibi proved a red herring introduced to mislead investigators."

1358. A red rag to a bull

■ Something likely to provoke anger or aggression.
"Mentioning his rival's name was a red rag to a bull."

1359. A red-letter day

■ A memorably special or joyful day.
"Graduation day was truly a red-letter day for the entire family."

1360. Redress the balance

■ To restore fairness or equilibrium after it has been disturbed.
"The appointment was intended to redress the balance."

SET 137 · Idioms 1361–1370

1361. Refute conclusively

■ To disprove something decisively and definitively.
"The original hypothesis was refuted conclusively by the new data."

1362. Rein in

■ To check or control something that threatens to get out of hand.
"The committee moved to rein in expenditure before it spiralled further."

1363. Reinforce the argument

■ To add strength and support to a position.
"Each new piece of evidence reinforced the original argument."

1364. Reinvent the wheel

■ To waste time devising something that already exists.
"There was no need to reinvent the wheel — existing frameworks were adequate."

1365. Remain to be seen

■ To be uncertain; not yet known.
"Whether the initiative will succeed remains to be seen."

1366. Reopen old wounds

■ To revive painful past disputes or grievances.
"The inquiry threatened to reopen old wounds on both sides."

1367. Rest on one's laurels

■ To be content with past achievements and not strive further.
"This was no time to rest on one's laurels."

1368. Restore confidence

■ To re-establish trust that has been damaged.
"A thorough and independent audit was needed to restore confidence."

1369. Restore the balance

■ To return to a state of equilibrium after a period of imbalance.
"The appointment was intended to restore the balance between the two wings."

1370. Retain credibility

■ To preserve one's reputation for reliability and trustworthiness.
"To retain its credibility, the committee had to act decisively."

SET 138 · Idioms 1371–1380

1371. Return to the fold

■ To rejoin a group or organisation one had previously left.
"After a period of estrangement, he returned to the fold."

1372. Reveal the full extent of

■ To disclose all the details of something, especially something problematic.
"The inquiry revealed the full extent of the regulatory failures."

1373. Ride on the coattails of

■ To benefit from someone else's success without contributing to it.
"His early reputation owed more to riding on the coattails of his colleague than to his own efforts."

1374. Ride out the storm

■ To endure a difficult period without suffering permanent harm.
"The institution managed to ride out the storm of public criticism."

1375. Ride roughshod over

■ To treat someone's concerns with complete disregard.
"The administration had ridden roughshod over the objections of experts."

1376. Right the wrongs

■ To correct injustices or put right what has been done incorrectly.
"The new administration pledged to right the wrongs of its predecessor."

1377. Rip up old sores

■ To revive old grievances or conflicts.
"Revisiting the old dispute served only to rip up old sores."

1378. Rise above

■ To behave in a way that is better than the provocation one has received.
"She rose above the petty attacks with considerable dignity."

1379. Rise from the ashes

■ To recover strongly after destruction or failure.
"The company rose from the ashes of the crisis stronger than before."

1380. Rise to prominence

■ To become well-known or important.
"She rose to prominence through years of meticulous scholarship."

SET 139 · Idioms 1381–1390

1381. Rise to the challenge

■ To prove capable of dealing with a difficult situation.
"When the moment came, the institution rose to the challenge."

1382. Rise to the occasion

■ To prove equal to a challenge.
"When the crisis broke, the leader rose magnificently to the occasion."

1383. Rob the cradle

■ To enter into a relationship with someone much younger; to promote someone too young.
"The critics accused the casting director of robbing the cradle."

1384. Rock the boat

■ To disturb a stable situation by raising controversy.
"He was warned not to rock the boat before the review was concluded."

1385. Roll with the punches

■ To adapt to setbacks and continue without serious disruption.
"A resilient organisation must know how to roll with the punches."

1386. Root and branch

■ Completely and thoroughly; at every level.
"A root-and-branch reform of the system was urgently required."

1387. A rope of sand

■ Something weak and ineffective; a fragile arrangement.
"The coalition proved a rope of sand under any serious pressure."

1388. The rough and tumble of

■ The competitive and sometimes harsh nature of a particular field.
"She had survived the rough and tumble of parliamentary life."

1389. A rough diamond

■ A person of good character but lacking refinement.
"He was, by most accounts, a genuine rough diamond."

1390. Ruffle someone's feathers

■ To annoy or upset someone.
"His frank assessment ruffled a few feathers."

SET 140 · Idioms 1391–1400

1391. A rule of thumb

■ A broadly accurate practical principle.
"As a rule of thumb, the process takes approximately six weeks."

1392. Run a gauntlet of criticism

■ To be subjected to sustained and intense criticism.
"Every new policy must run the gauntlet of critical scrutiny."

1393. Run a tight ship

■ To manage a firm and well-organised operation.
"Her predecessors had notably failed to run a tight ship."

1394. Run aground

■ To fail or come to a halt, especially due to unforeseen obstacles.
"Without additional support, the initiative ran aground."

1395. Run counter to

■ To contradict or be opposed to.
"The decision ran counter to the established policy."

1396. Run deep

■ To be strong and fundamental.
"Resentment of the reform ran very deep in the profession."

1397. Run into the sand

■ To fail after initially promising progress.
"The ambitious initiative ran into the sand after the funding collapsed."

1398. Run rings round

■ To outperform someone completely in an activity.
"The experienced negotiator ran rings round the inexperienced delegation."

1399. Run with an idea

■ To develop and pursue a suggestion with enthusiasm.
"The research team ran with the idea and produced remarkable results."

1400. Rush one's fences

■ To act hastily without preparation.
"By rushing his fences, he made a number of avoidable errors."

SET 141 · Idioms 1401–1410

1401. A safe pair of hands

■ Someone who can be trusted to handle a situation reliably.

"The appointment was welcomed as providing a safe pair of hands."

1402. Safeguard one's interests

■ To take steps to protect what is important to one.

"Every party to the agreement sought to safeguard its own interests."

1403. Sail close to the wind

■ To act in a way that approaches the limits of acceptability.

"His financial dealings had sailed close to the wind."

1404. Save face

■ To preserve one's dignity in a potentially embarrassing situation.

"The compromise was designed to allow both parties to save face."

1405. Scale new heights

■ To reach a new level of achievement.

"The institution had scaled new heights of international recognition."

1406. The scales fall from one's eyes

■ One comes suddenly to understand the truth.

"When the accounts were published, the scales fell from investors' eyes."

1407. Scatter to the winds

■ To disperse completely.

"After the organisation collapsed, its members scattered to the winds."

1408. Scratch the surface

■ To deal with only a small part of a much larger subject.

"The report barely scratched the surface of the underlying problem."

1409. Seal one's fate

■ To make an unpleasant outcome inevitable.

"The disclosure sealed the minister's political fate."

1410. A second string to one's bow

■ An alternative skill or plan available if the first fails.

"Her training in law gave her a valuable second string to her bow."

SET 142 · Idioms 1411–1420

1411. Second to none

■ Of the highest quality; unsurpassed.

"Her expertise in international law was second to none."

1412. See something through

■ To complete something despite difficulties.

"She was determined to see the project through to its conclusion."

1413. See the light

■ To come to understand or accept something.

"After much resistance, the committee finally began to see the light."

1414. Seek common ground

■ To look for areas of agreement.

"The mediator's role was to seek common ground between the two parties."

1415. Seize the initiative

■ To act first and thereby gain a position of advantage.

"The delegation seized the initiative with an early bold proposal."

1416. Seize the moment

■ To take advantage of an opportunity immediately.

"When the chance presented itself, she seized the moment."

1417. A seminal work

■ An influential piece of writing that has a major effect on later thought.

"The publication proved to be a truly seminal work in the discipline."

1418. Send ripples through

■ To have a widespread effect on something.

"The announcement sent ripples through the entire industry."

1419. Separate the men from the boys

■ To show who is truly capable under difficult conditions.

"The final examination would separate the men from the boys."

1420. Separate the wheat from the chaff

■ To distinguish things of quality from those of little worth.

"The editorial process was designed to separate the wheat from the chaff."

SET 143 · Idioms 1421–1430

1421. Separate wheat from chaff

■ To identify what is genuinely valuable from what is worthless.

"The peer review process exists to separate wheat from chaff."

1422. Serve notice

■ To formally warn that action will be taken.

"The regulator served notice that it would not tolerate further breaches."

1423. Set a benchmark

■ To establish a standard against which others will be measured.

"The study set a new benchmark for methodological rigour."

1424. Set a high bar

■ To establish a demanding standard of performance.

"The original research had set a very high bar for all subsequent work."

1425. Set a precedent

■ To establish a pattern or standard for future cases.

"The ruling set an important precedent for subsequent decisions."

1426. Set aside differences

■ To ignore or suspend one's disagreements for a common purpose.

"Both parties agreed to set aside their differences and cooperate."

1427. Set great store by

■ To value something very highly.

"The institution set great store by scholarly rigour."

1428. Set one's agenda

■ To determine the priorities and programme for one's activities.

"It was important for the committee to set its own agenda."

1429. Set one's sights on

■ To direct one's ambition toward a goal.

"She had set her sights on the chair of the department."

1430. Set the agenda

■ To determine what issues will be discussed or prioritised.

"The chair's opening remarks effectively set the agenda for the entire conference."

SET 144 · Idioms 1431–1440

1431. Set the stage for

■ To create the conditions for something to happen.

"The early reforms set the stage for the subsequent transformation."

1432. Set the Thames on fire

■ To achieve something remarkable or sensational.

"Competent but cautious, he had never set the Thames on fire."

1433. Set the tone

■ To establish the character or mood of something.

"The opening address set an admirably judicious tone for the conference."

1434. Set the wheels in motion

■ To start a process or series of events.

"A single decision set the wheels in motion for a complete review."

1435. Settle for less

■ To accept something inferior to what was originally sought.

"She was not prepared to settle for less than a full apology."

1436. Settle the matter

■ To bring a dispute or question to a definitive conclusion.

"The ruling of the higher court settled the matter once and for all."

1437. The shape of things to come

■ An indication of how future developments will unfold.

"The pilot scheme was regarded as the shape of things to come."

1438. Shed light on

■ To make something clearer or better understood.

"The discovery shed considerable light on the earlier period."

1439. Shift the goalposts

■ To change the criteria or rules unfairly once a process has begun.

"Midway through the project, the client shifted the goalposts."

1440. Shore up

■ To reinforce or support something that is weakening.

"Emergency measures were taken to shore up the collapsing structure."

SET 145 · Idioms 1441–1450

1441. Shore up one's position

■ To strengthen a position that is under threat.
"The reshuffle was designed to shore up the minister's position."

1442. A shot in the arm

■ Something that provides encouragement or renewed energy.
"The government grant was a much-needed shot in the arm for the arts."

1443. A shot in the dark

■ A guess made with little hope of success.
"His conjecture about the culprit was a shot in the dark."

1444. Show a clean pair of heels

■ To escape from or outrun a pursuer; to leave others behind.
"In the subsequent decades, the institution showed a clean pair of heels to its rivals."

1445. Show one's teeth

■ To demonstrate power or aggressive intent.
"When challenged, the committee finally showed its teeth."

1446. Show the white feather

■ To display cowardice.
"He had never shown the white feather in all his years of service."

1447. Sign off on

■ To give one's formal approval to something.
"The director had to sign off on each major expenditure."

1448. Sink or swim

■ To succeed or fail by one's own efforts.
"He was thrown into the role and left to sink or swim."

1449. Sit on one's hands

■ To fail to act when action is expected or required.
"The board was criticised for sitting on its hands during the crisis."

1450. Sit on the fence

■ To remain uncommitted on a controversial issue.
"The commentator maintained an irritating habit of sitting on the fence."

SET 146 · Idioms 1451–1460

1451. Sit well with

■ To be satisfactory or acceptable to someone.
"The decision did not sit well with several members of the committee."

1452. Skate on thin ice

■ To be in a precarious or risky situation.
"By making such claims without evidence, the journalist was skating on very thin ice."

1453. A slap in the face

■ A sharp insult or rebuff; an act of rejection.
"Being passed over for promotion was a slap in the face."

1454. Slippery slope

■ A course of action that leads progressively to worse outcomes.
"The committee was warned against starting down a slippery slope."

1455. A slow burn

■ A feeling of anger or resentment that builds gradually.
"His humiliation had been a slow burn, quietly intensifying over months."

1456. Slow to a halt

■ To decelerate progressively until all movement ceases.
"Without new investment, the programme slowed to a halt."

1457. The small hours

■ The very early hours after midnight.
"The agreement was finally reached in the small hours of the morning."

1458. Smell a rat

■ To suspect something dishonest or wrong.
"When the figures were revised without explanation, the auditor smelled a rat."

1459. Smell of the lamp

■ Showing signs of excessive effort or over-elaboration.
"The essay's studied elaboration smelled faintly of the lamp."

1460. A snake in the grass

■ A treacherous person concealing their true nature.
"He presented himself as a friend but proved a snake in the grass."

SET 147 · Idioms 1461–1470

1461. Soften the blow

■ To make bad news or a difficult situation less unpleasant.

"The severance package was designed to soften the blow of redundancy."

1462. Someone's dogs are barking

■ Someone's feet are hurting.

"After the long march through the city, his dogs were most certainly barking."

1463. A sop to Cerberus

■ A trivial concession made to appease or pacify someone.

"The modest pay offer was widely regarded as a sop to Cerberus."

1464. Sound the alarm

■ To warn of an impending danger.

"Several economists had sounded the alarm months before the crash."

1465. Sow one's wild oats

■ To indulge in youthful excess before assuming responsibilities.

"He had sowed his wild oats in his early years and later settled to serious scholarship."

1466. Speak out against

■ To express one's public opposition to something.

"She was one of the few who spoke out against the decision."

1467. Speak the same language

■ To have a shared understanding, values, or frame of reference.

"It quickly became clear that the two parties spoke the same language."

1468. Spearhead a campaign

■ To lead the principal effort of a campaign or initiative.

"He agreed to spearhead the campaign for constitutional reform."

1469. Spill the beans

■ To reveal secret or confidential information.

"A whistleblower eventually spilled the beans on the malpractice."

1470. Spin a yarn

■ To tell a long, imaginative, and often implausible story.

"The old ambassador was a gifted yarn-spinner."

SET 148 · Idioms 1471–1480

1471. A square deal

■ Fair and honest treatment.

"The workers demanded nothing more than a square deal."

1472. Square the accounts

■ To settle all financial or moral obligations.

"The final payment squared the accounts between the two organisations."

1473. Square the circle

■ To attempt the impossible.

"Simultaneously cutting taxes and increasing spending was an attempt to square the circle."

1474. A stab in the back

■ A sudden and unexpected betrayal.

"His public criticism was a stab in the back for his colleagues."

1475. Stand accused of

■ To be formally or publicly charged with something.

"The organisation stood accused of systematic misrepresentation."

1476. Stand in good stead

■ To be of future benefit or advantage.

"The early training stood her in remarkably good stead."

1477. Stand in stark contrast to

■ To be very markedly different from something.

"The actual outcome stood in stark contrast to the original projections."

1478. Stand on its own merits

■ To be judged solely on its own qualities without external support.

"The proposal must be assessed on its own merits."

1479. Stand on solid ground

■ To have a secure and well-founded basis for one's position.

"With such strong evidence, the legal team stood on solid ground."

1480. Stand or fall by

■ To be judged entirely by the quality of something.

"The administration would stand or fall by its record on the economy."

SET 149 · Idioms 1481–1490

1481. Stand the test of time

■ To remain valuable or effective over a long period.
"Only the most distinguished works stand the test of time."

1482. Stand up to examination

■ To remain valid and convincing when scrutinised closely.
"The argument stood up to the most rigorous examination."

1483. Stay the course

■ To continue with a course of action despite difficulty.
"The resolve to stay the course was critical to eventual success."

1484. Steal someone's thunder

■ To take credit for another's achievement.
"By publishing first, the rival team stole the researchers' thunder."

1485. Stem the tide

■ To stop or curb the spread of something.
"New measures were introduced to stem the tide of public discontent."

1486. Step into the breach

■ To take on a role when someone else cannot.
"When the keynote speaker withdrew, a colleague stepped into the breach."

1487. Step outside the comfort zone

■ To do something beyond one's usual experience or ability.
"The programme encouraged participants to step outside their comfort zones."

1488. Step up to the plate

■ To accept a responsibility and act on it.
"The moment had come for the leadership to step up to the plate."

1489. A stepping stone

■ A stage that assists progress towards a greater goal.
"The fellowship served as a stepping stone to a distinguished career."

1490. Stick one's neck out

■ To take a risk or expose oneself to criticism.
"He was not one to stick his neck out without strong supporting evidence."

SET 150 · Idioms 1491–1500

1491. Stick to one's guns

■ To maintain one's position firmly under pressure.
"Though widely criticised, she stuck to her guns throughout the controversy."

1492. The sticking point

■ The particular issue on which an agreement is failing.
"Compensation remained the principal sticking point in the negotiations."

1493. A sting in the tail

■ An unexpected unpleasant ending or sting.
"The generous offer had a sting in the tail — onerous conditions."

1494. A stitch in time saves nine

■ Prompt action prevents larger problems later.
"Attending to the minor fault early was a stitch in time."

1495. Stop short of

■ To go almost but not quite as far as something.
"The report stopped short of accusing the management of fraud."

1496. A stop-gap measure

■ A temporary solution intended to serve until a permanent one is found.
"The interim arrangement was a stop-gap measure at best."

1497. A storm in a teacup

■ Great excitement over a trivial matter.
"The controversy amounted to little more than a storm in a teacup."

1498. Strain every nerve

■ To make the utmost effort.
"The rescue team strained every nerve to reach the survivors."

1499. Strike a balance

■ To achieve an appropriate equilibrium.
"Good policy must strike a balance between efficiency and equity."

1500. Strike a blow for

■ To do something in support of a cause or principle.
"The ruling struck a significant blow for freedom of expression."

SET 151 · Idioms 1501–1510

1501. Strike a chord

- To resonate emotionally with someone.
"The opening passage struck a deeply sympathetic chord."

1502. Strike at the foundations of

- To threaten the most fundamental basis of something.
"The revelation struck at the very foundations of public trust."

1503. Strike at the root of

- To attack the fundamental cause.
"The reform sought to strike at the root of the problem."

1504. Strike oil

- To have sudden good fortune or find something valuable.
"The obscure archive proved a goldmine — the researchers had struck oil."

1505. Strike the keynote

- To set the tone or main theme of something.
"The opening address struck the keynote for the entire conference."

1506. Strike the right note

- To produce exactly the right effect or impression.
"The opening remarks struck precisely the right note of solemnity."

1507. Strike while the iron is hot

- To act quickly while conditions are favourable.
"They struck while the iron was hot, presenting the proposal without delay."

1508. A stroke of luck

- A fortunate and unexpected event.
"Finding the original document was a genuine stroke of luck."

1509. Subject to interpretation

- Capable of being understood in more than one way.
"The clause was sufficiently vague to be subject to different interpretations."

1510. Subject to revision

- Liable to be altered or amended.
"All current arrangements were subject to revision."

SET 152 · Idioms 1511–1520

1511. Suffer the consequences

- To experience the results of one's actions, especially bad ones.
"Those who disregarded the warnings suffered the consequences."

1512. Sum and substance

- The essential or most important part of something.
"The sum and substance of the argument is that reform is overdue."

1513. Sum it up

- To briefly describe the essential points of something.
"To sum it up: the policy had failed on every count."

1514. Sum total

- The final and complete amount or result.
"The sum total of the evidence pointed in one direction only."

1515. Support the argument

- To provide evidence or reasoning in favour of a position.
"The new data powerfully supported the original argument."

1516. Sustain an argument

- To maintain and defend a line of reasoning.
"He was unable to sustain the argument under cross-examination."

1517. Sustain the argument

- To maintain and defend a line of reasoning successfully.
"He proved unable to sustain the argument under cross-examination."

1518. Swallow the bait

- To be deceived or tricked.
"Inexperienced as he was, he swallowed the bait entirely."

1519. Sway public opinion

- To influence or change what the public believes.
"The evidence was powerful enough to sway public opinion decisively."

1520. Swim against the tide

- To oppose prevailing opinion or trend.
"She has always been prepared to swim against the tide on matters of principle."

SET 153 · Idioms 1521–1530

1521. Swim with the tide

■ To follow prevailing opinion without independent thought.

"He was criticised for merely swimming with the tide."

1522. The sword of Damocles

■ An ever-present threat hanging over one.

"The pending litigation hung like the sword of Damocles over the company."

1523. Take a back seat

■ To occupy a subordinate or passive role.

"Once the new director was appointed, she willingly took a back seat."

1524. Take a dim view of

■ To regard something with disapproval.

"The committee took a very dim view of such conduct."

1525. Take a hard line on

■ To adopt a strict and uncompromising approach.

"The committee took a very hard line on any breach of procedure."

1526. Take a leaf out of someone's book

■ To follow someone's example.

"The younger institutions would do well to take a leaf out of the older university's book."

1527. Take a long view

■ To consider the long-term implications rather than immediate consequences.

"Sound policy-making requires taking the long view."

1528. Take a measured approach

■ To act in a calm, considered, and proportionate manner.

"The committee took a measured approach to the question."

1529. Take account of

■ To consider when making a judgement or decision.

"The panel was required to take account of all relevant factors."

1530. Take aim at

■ To direct criticism or attack at a specific target.

"The report took aim at the most serious institutional failures."

SET 154 · Idioms 1531–1540

1531. Take cognizance of

■ To take account of; to notice formally.

"The court took cognizance of the exceptional circumstances."

1532. Take exception

■ To object strongly to something.

"The delegate took strong exception to the characterisation."

1533. Take exception to

■ To object to or take offence at.

"She took strong exception to the implication in the question."

1534. Take its toll

■ To cause accumulated damage or exhaustion.

"The relentless pace was beginning to take its toll."

1535. Take note

■ To observe and record something carefully.

"The committee was invited to take careful note of the supplementary evidence."

1536. Take on board

■ To accept and incorporate a suggestion or piece of information.

"The committee took the criticism on board and revised the proposal."

1537. Take on trust

■ To accept something without requiring proof.

"Not everything can simply be taken on trust."

1538. Take one's cue from

■ To follow the example set by someone else.

"The other departments took their cue from the flagship initiative."

1539. Take place in the public domain

■ To occur in a way that is accessible and visible to everyone.

"All proceedings must take place in the public domain."

1540. Take precedence over

■ To be considered more important than something else.

"Security considerations must take precedence over all other concerns."

SET 155 · Idioms 1541–1550

1541. Take root

■ To become established and begin to develop.
"The reforms had taken root in the fabric of the institution."

1542. Take shape

■ To begin to develop into a clear form.
"By the third draft, the argument was finally taking shape."

1543. Take someone to task

■ To reprimand or criticise someone firmly.
"The regulator took the institution to task over its governance failures."

1544. Take stock

■ To make an assessment of one's current situation.
"After the setback, it was time to take careful stock."

1545. Take stock of

■ To assess a situation carefully.
"After the setback, it was time to take careful stock of the position."

1546. Take the bitter with the sweet

■ To accept the unpleasant aspects of life along with the pleasant.
"A mature understanding of events requires taking the bitter with the sweet."

1547. Take the bull by the horns

■ To deal with a difficult situation in a bold and direct manner.
"The new chair took the bull by the horns and restructured the committee."

1548. Take the edge off

■ To reduce the unpleasant intensity of something.
"The advance warning somewhat took the edge off the bad news."

1549. Take the helm

■ To assume leadership or control.
"She took the helm at a particularly challenging moment."

1550. Take the high road

■ To behave with dignity and generosity, refusing to act spitefully.
"Despite the provocation, she chose to take the high road."

SET 156 · Idioms 1551–1560

1551. Take the long view

■ To consider future implications rather than immediate circumstances.
"Sustainable governance requires taking the long view."

1552. Take the plunge

■ To commit to a risky decision after hesitation.
"After months of deliberation, the board finally took the plunge."

1553. Take the wind out of someone's sails

■ To deflate someone's confidence or enthusiasm.
"The lukewarm reception took the wind out of the director's sails."

1554. Take to heart

■ To be deeply affected by something.
"She took the criticism very much to heart."

1555. Take to one's heels

■ To flee rapidly.
"When challenged, the intruder immediately took to his heels."

1556. Take umbrage at

■ To feel offended or resentful at something.
"He took considerable umbrage at the implication of incompetence."

1557. Take with a grain of salt

■ To view something sceptically.
"One should take such claims with a considerable grain of salt."

1558. Talk through one's hat

■ To speak without knowledge or understanding.
"The commentator was widely accused of talking through his hat."

1559. A tall order

■ A task extremely difficult to accomplish.
"Delivering the project within budget was a very tall order."

1560. Tarnish one's reputation

■ To damage the reputation one has carefully built.
"A single reckless statement threatened to tarnish his entire reputation."

SET 157 · Idioms 1561–1570

1561. Tell against

■ To serve as evidence or an argument in opposition to something.

"His earlier statements told heavily against him in the proceedings."

1562. Tell its own tale

■ To be self-evidently revealing without explanation.

"The statistics told their own tale."

1563. Tell the difference

■ To be able to distinguish between two things.

"An expert can immediately tell the difference."

1564. A tempest in a teapot

■ A great fuss over a trivial matter.

"The dispute over seating arrangements was a tempest in a teapot."

1565. Tempt fate

■ To act in a way that risks causing bad luck.

"To declare victory before the count was complete was tempting fate."

1566. Test the waters

■ To explore a situation cautiously before committing.

"Before making the announcement, he tested the waters discreetly."

1567. Test to destruction

■ To subject something to examination so thorough it may be ruined.

"The proposals were tested very nearly to destruction in committee."

1568. To the exclusion of all else

■ With complete disregard for everything other than one's focus.

"He pursued the research to the exclusion of all else."

1569. To the fore

■ Into a prominent or leading position.

"The crisis brought questions of governance to the fore."

1570. The thin end of the wedge

■ An apparently minor action that opens the way to more serious consequences.

"Many regarded the initial concession as the thin end of the wedge."

SET 158 · Idioms 1571–1580

1571. Think outside the box

■ To consider unconventional or creative solutions.

"Resolving the impasse required each party to think outside the box."

1572. Think twice about

■ To reconsider a decision before acting.

"He was advised to think twice about the consequences of publication."

1573. A thorn in one's side

■ A persistent source of irritation or trouble.

"The opposition MP proved a perennial thorn in the minister's side."

1574. A thorn in the flesh

■ A constant source of irritation or trouble.

"The regulatory requirement had become a thorn in the flesh of the industry."

1575. A thorny issue

■ A matter that is difficult, complex, and likely to cause disagreement.

"The question of land rights remained a particularly thorny issue."

1576. Through and through

■ Completely; in every way.

"He was an academic through and through."

1577. Through the ranks

■ Progressing from the lowest levels of an organisation to the highest.

"He had risen through the ranks over many decades."

1578. Through thick and thin

■ In good times and bad; through all difficulties.

"They had stood by each other through thick and thin."

1579. Throw a lifeline to

■ To provide an essential means of rescue or assistance.

"The government's intervention threw a lifeline to the struggling sector."

1580. Throw a spanner in the works

■ To introduce something that disrupts or prevents progress.

"The last-minute legal challenge threw a considerable spanner in the works."

SET 159 · Idioms 1581–1590

1581. Throw caution to the wind

■ To act recklessly without regard for consequences.
"He threw all caution to the wind and invested everything in the venture."

1582. Throw cold water on

■ To express discouragement or scepticism about.
"The chancellor threw cold water on the more optimistic projections."

1583. Throw down the gauntlet

■ To issue an open challenge.
"The publication of the open letter threw down the gauntlet."

1584. Throw dust in someone's eyes

■ To deceive someone; to divert attention from the truth.
"His elaborate explanation was designed to throw dust in the committee's eyes."

1585. Throw good money after bad

■ To continue investing in something that has already failed.
"Pouring further resources into the failing division was throwing good money after bad."

1586. Throw in the towel

■ To admit defeat; to give up.
"After months of fruitless negotiation, the firm threw in the towel."

1587. Throw into question

■ To cast doubt upon or cause uncertainty about something.
"The new evidence threw the entire hypothesis into question."

1588. Throw light on

■ To clarify or help explain something.
"The newly discovered documents threw considerable light on the period."

1589. Throw one's weight behind

■ To give one's full support to something.
"The academy threw its full weight behind the reform proposals."

1590. Throw up one's cards

■ To give up or quit; to abandon an endeavour.
"Faced with the scale of the problem, he threw up his cards."

SET 160 · Idioms 1591–1600

1591. Tilt at windmills

■ To fight imaginary enemies; to engage in futile crusades.
"Critics accused him of tilting at windmills in his campaign."

1592. Time and tide

■ Natural events that wait for no one.
"Time and tide wait for no man, as the saying goes."

1593. The tip of the iceberg

■ A small visible part of a much larger underlying problem.
"The disclosed cases were merely the tip of the iceberg."

1594. Tip the scales

■ To influence the outcome of something decisively.
"The last-minute disclosure tipped the scales against the defendant."

1595. Toe the line

■ To conform to expected standards or rules.
"All candidates were required to toe the party line on the issue."

1596. Toe to toe

■ Facing each other directly in confrontation.
"The two leaders stood toe to toe during the summit."

1597. Tooth and nail

■ With every possible effort and determination.
"She fought tooth and nail to preserve the integrity of the institution."

1598. Touch a raw nerve

■ To cause a strong emotional reaction by mentioning something sensitive.
"The question touched a raw nerve with the delegate."

1599. Touch and go

■ A situation of great uncertainty; potentially dangerous.
"For several hours, the outcome of the surgery was decidedly touch and go."

1600. A touch of the tar brush

■ A dated and offensive suggestion of mixed heritage — used here only as a documented idiom of historical record.
"This expression is historically documented but no longer acceptable in modern usage."

SET 161 · Idioms 1601–1610

1601. Touch the nerve of

■ To reach the most sensitive or fundamental aspect of a matter.

"The question touched the nerve of the entire constitutional controversy."

1602. Touch wood

■ An expression used to avoid tempting fate after a favourable statement.

"The project appeared to be on schedule — touch wood."

1603. A tower of strength

■ A person who provides reliable and steadfast support.

"During the crisis, the senior partner proved a tower of strength."

1604. Trade on

■ To exploit a particular attribute or reputation for advantage.

"He was accused of trading on his family name rather than his own merits."

1605. Trade-off

■ A balance between two desirable but incompatible things.

"Every major policy involves a trade-off between competing values."

1606. Tread a fine line

■ To act carefully between two difficult or opposing demands.

"The mediator trod a very fine line between the two hostile parties."

1607. Tread carefully

■ To proceed with great caution.

"In such a sensitive negotiation, it was essential to tread carefully."

1608. Tread on eggshells

■ To act very cautiously to avoid causing offence.

"In such company, one was compelled to tread on eggshells."

1609. Tread water

■ To make no progress despite continued effort.

"Without new investment, the enterprise was merely treading water."

1610. Trigger a debate

■ To initiate or provoke a significant discussion.

"The announcement triggered a wide-ranging debate about the nature of accountability."

SET 162 · Idioms 1611–1620

1611. Turn a blind eye to

■ To deliberately ignore wrongdoing or a problem.

"The regulator was accused of turning a blind eye to systematic abuse."

1612. Turn a deaf ear to

■ To deliberately ignore or refuse to listen.

"The appeals of the petitioners were turned a deaf ear to at the ministry."

1613. Turn a new leaf

■ To change one's behaviour for the better.

"The institution had genuinely turned a new leaf under its new leadership."

1614. Turn a profit

■ To produce a financial gain.

"The initiative finally began to turn a modest profit in its second year."

1615. A turn of the tide

■ A reversal in circumstances or fortune.

"The discovery of new evidence marked a dramatic turn of the tide."

1616. Turn one's back on

■ To deliberately abandon or disregard someone or something.

"He refused to turn his back on the principles that had guided his career."

1617. Turn over a new leaf

■ To make a fresh start; to reform one's conduct.

"The organisation was determined to turn over a new leaf."

1618. Turn the corner

■ To begin to recover after a period of difficulty.

"There were signs that the organisation had finally turned the corner."

1619. Turn the tables

■ To reverse a situation to one's own advantage.

"New evidence allowed the defence to turn the tables dramatically."

1620. Turn the tide

■ To reverse the direction or progress of events.

"A single decisive intervention turned the tide of the campaign."

SET 163 · Idioms 1621–1630

1621. A turncoat

■ A person who switches loyalties; a traitor.
"The defector was branded a turncoat by his former colleagues."

1622. Twist the knife

■ To make a painful situation worse, often deliberately.
"The editorial seemed designed specifically to twist the knife further."

1623. Under a cloud

■ Regarded with suspicion or in disgrace.
"He retired from public life under something of a cloud."

1624. Under constant pressure

■ Subject to sustained and unrelenting demand.
"The department operated under constant pressure of work."

1625. Under false pretences

■ By means of a deliberately created false impression.
"He had obtained the documents entirely under false pretences."

1626. Under fire

■ Being subjected to strong criticism or attack.
"The minister came under immediate fire for his remarks."

1627. Under no illusions

■ Having a clear and accurate understanding of reality.
"She was under no illusions about the scale of the challenge."

1628. Under one's breath

■ Said quietly so as not to be easily heard.
"She muttered something under her breath that went unrecorded."

1629. Under scrutiny

■ Subject to close and critical examination.
"Every aspect of the proposed legislation was placed under intense scrutiny."

1630. Under the carpet

■ Hidden from public view; concealed or suppressed.
"The inconvenient facts were swept under the carpet."

SET 164 · Idioms 1631–1640

1631. Under the rose

■ In secret; confidentially.
"The arrangement was conducted entirely under the rose."

1632. Under the skin

■ Beneath the outward appearance; at a deeper level.
"Under the skin, the two positions were not so different."

1633. Under the weather

■ Feeling slightly unwell.
"He was obliged to cancel the lecture as he was somewhat under the weather."

1634. Underline the importance of

■ To emphasise how significant something is.
"The findings underlined the critical importance of early intervention."

1635. Undermine confidence

■ To weaken the trust or certainty of others.
"The series of failures began to undermine confidence in the system."

1636. Undermine the foundations of

■ To weaken the fundamental basis of something.
"The scandal threatened to undermine the very foundations of public trust."

1637. Unequivocal in its support

■ Giving clear and unconditional backing.
"The committee was unequivocal in its support for the proposal."

1638. Unpick the argument

■ To examine and dismantle a line of reasoning carefully.
"The barrister proceeded methodically to unpick the opposing argument."

1639. Until further notice

■ Until a new instruction is given to change the current arrangement.
"The building would remain closed until further notice."

1640. Up in arms

■ In a state of indignation and protest.
"The academic community was up in arms over the proposed changes."

SET 165 · Idioms 1641–1650

1641. Up to one's neck

■ Deeply involved in a difficult situation.

"He was up to his neck in the very scandal he had claimed to oppose."

1642. Up to the hilt

■ Fully or completely; to the maximum extent.

"The organisation was committed up to the hilt."

1643. Up to the mark

■ Meeting the required standard.

"The revised submission was still not quite up to the mark."

1644. An uphill battle

■ A task requiring great effort against difficult opposition.

"Convincing the board to change direction proved an uphill battle."

1645. An uphill task

■ A difficult task requiring sustained effort.

"Restoring public trust after the scandal was an uphill task."

1646. Uphold a principle

■ To maintain and defend a fundamental belief or rule.

"The judiciary is charged with upholding the principles of the constitution."

1647. Uphold the rule of law

■ To maintain and enforce the principle that law governs all.

"Democratic institutions must at all times uphold the rule of law."

1648. Ups and downs

■ Periods of both good and bad fortune.

"Every career has its ups and downs."

1649. Use a sledgehammer to crack a nut

■ To use excessive force for a trivial problem.

"Applying the full weight of regulation to such a minor case was using a sledgehammer to crack a nut."

1650. Use every trick in the book

■ To employ every available stratagem.

"The prosecution used every trick in the book to secure a conviction."

SET 166 · Idioms 1651–1660

1651. Venture an opinion

■ To offer a view tentatively.

"She ventured a cautious opinion on the likely outcome of the inquiry."

1652. Venture into

■ To make a bold start in a new area.

"The organisation ventured into an entirely new field of inquiry."

1653. A vexed question

■ A problem that is difficult to resolve and causes disagreement.

"The question of compensation remained thoroughly vexed."

1654. A vicious circle

■ A sequence of events in which each problem aggravates the one before.

"Poverty and poor health form a vicious circle."

1655. Vindicate one's position

■ To have one's judgement or views proved correct.

"The subsequent events completely vindicated her original position."

1656. Voice a dissenting view

■ To express an opinion contrary to the majority.

"One member voiced a dissenting view that merited serious attention."

1657. Voice concerns

■ To express one's anxieties or reservations.

"Several members voiced concerns about the proposed timetable."

1658. Walk a tightrope

■ To deal carefully with a situation of competing demands.

"The mediator walked a tightrope between the two hostile parties."

1659. Walk back

■ To retract or modify a statement previously made.

"The minister was forced to walk back his earlier assertion."

1660. A walk in the park

■ Something easily accomplished.

"With proper preparation, the interview was a walk in the park."

SET 167 · Idioms 1661–1670

1661. Walk the talk

■ To act in accordance with one's stated principles.
"True leaders must be prepared to walk the talk."

1662. A war of attrition

■ A prolonged conflict in which each side tries to wear the other down.
"The legal battle became a war of attrition that exhausted both parties."

1663. Warrant close attention

■ To deserve careful and detailed examination.
"The discrepancy warranted considerably closer attention."

1664. Wash one's hands of

■ To disclaim all responsibility for something.
"He washed his hands of the matter entirely after the second failure."

1665. Water under the bridge

■ Something past and no longer important or relevant.
"The old grievances were water under the bridge."

1666. A watershed moment

■ A turning point of decisive importance.
"The fall of the Wall was a watershed moment in modern history."

1667. Wear and tear

■ Damage from ordinary use over time.
"The fabric showed considerable wear and tear."

1668. Wear one's heart on one's sleeve

■ To make one's feelings openly apparent.
"She was not a politician inclined to wear her heart on her sleeve."

1669. Weather the criticism

■ To endure and survive a period of hostile comment.
"The institution weathered the criticism and emerged with its reputation intact."

1670. Weather the storm

■ To endure a difficult period successfully.
"The firm weathered the storm and emerged in a sound financial position."

SET 168 · Idioms 1671–1680

1671. Weigh against

■ To consider as a factor that works in opposition to something.
"The risks had to be weighed carefully against the potential benefits."

1672. Weigh anchor

■ To begin a venture; to depart.
"With all preparations complete, the team weighed anchor."

1673. Weigh heavily on

■ To cause a significant burden of anxiety or responsibility.
"The knowledge of what had occurred weighed heavily on the witnesses."

1674. Weigh one's words

■ To choose what one says with great care.
"A diplomat must always weigh every word with precision."

1675. Well placed to

■ In a favourable position to do something.
"With her experience, she was well placed to lead the initiative."

1676. Well-worn argument

■ An argument that has been used so often it has lost its force.
"He fell back on the well-worn argument that more time was needed."

1677. Wend one's way

■ To proceed or travel slowly and by a winding route.
"He wended his way through the labyrinthine corridors of the ministry."

1678. Wet behind the ears

■ Inexperienced; lacking maturity or knowledge.
"As a wet-behind-the-ears assistant, she had much to learn."

1679. Whistle in the dark

■ To pretend to be unafraid in a frightening situation.
"His bravado was nothing more than whistling in the dark."

1680. A white elephant

■ A possession costly to maintain and yielding little benefit.
"The stadium became a white elephant after the games concluded."

SET 169 · Idioms 1681–1690

1681. A white lie

■ A harmless or small lie to avoid hurting someone's feelings.

"She told a small white lie to spare his feelings."

1682. A wild-goose chase

■ A fruitless and misguided pursuit.

"The investigation turned into a wild-goose chase."

1683. Win approval

■ To obtain the formal consent or commendation of others.

"The revised proposal eventually won the approval of the full committee."

1684. Win hands down

■ To win very easily and decisively.

"The proposal won hands down in the committee vote."

1685. Win hearts and minds

■ To gain genuine emotional and intellectual support.

"Any lasting reform requires winning the hearts and minds of those affected."

1686. Win over

■ To succeed in persuading someone.

"Her presentation finally won over the most sceptical members of the panel."

1687. Win the argument

■ To successfully persuade others that one's position is correct.

"She had won the argument on the evidence, if not the vote."

1688. A window of opportunity

■ A short period of time in which an opportunity may be seized.

"There was a narrow window of opportunity before the vote closed."

1689. Wipe the slate clean

■ To make a fresh start, forgetting past offences.

"Both parties agreed to wipe the slate clean and begin afresh."

1690. With a grain of salt

■ With a degree of scepticism; not entirely literally.

"His dramatic assertions should be taken with a pinch of salt."

SET 170 · Idioms 1691–1700

1691. With a heavy heart

■ With great reluctance and sadness.

"With a heavy heart, he submitted his resignation."

1692. With a light touch

■ Using a delicate, restrained, and skilful approach.

"The best regulation operates with a light touch."

1693. With all due circumspection

■ With appropriate caution and careful consideration.

"The matter should be approached with all due circumspection."

1694. With all due respect

■ Used to express polite disagreement.

"With all due respect, the evidence does not support that conclusion."

1695. With bated breath

■ In a state of tense anticipation.

"The verdict was awaited with bated breath."

1696. With flying colours

■ With considerable distinction and success.

"She passed the final examination with flying colours."

1697. With good grace

■ In a generous and willing manner, without resentment.

"He accepted the decision with commendable good grace."

1698. With good reason

■ For a justifiable and understandable purpose.

"She was cautious, and with good reason."

1699. With impunity

■ Without fear of punishment or consequences.

"Such behaviour could not be permitted to continue with impunity."

1700. With might and main

■ With all one's strength and effort.

"He pursued the cause with might and main."

SET 171 · Idioms 1701–1710

1701. With one voice

■ Speaking or acting in complete unison.

"The committee spoke with one voice in condemning the conduct."

1702. With one's tail between one's legs

■ Feeling ashamed or defeated.

"He left the meeting with his tail between his legs."

1703. With open arms

■ Warmly and with great enthusiasm.

"The new appointments were received with open arms."

1704. With the benefit of hindsight

■ Using knowledge available only after the event.

"With the benefit of hindsight, the errors appear blindingly obvious."

1705. Within an ace of

■ Very close to a particular outcome.

"He came within an ace of winning the prize."

1706. Within living memory

■ Within the period that living people can recall.

"It was the worst financial crisis within living memory."

1707. Within striking distance

■ Close enough to reach or achieve.

"An agreement was at last within striking distance."

1708. Without let or hindrance

■ Without any obstruction or impediment.

"Goods must be able to move without let or hindrance across the border."

1709. Without prejudice

■ Without affecting any legal rights or admissions.

"The offer was made entirely without prejudice."

1710. Without rhyme or reason

■ Without any discernible logic or purpose.

"The decision appeared to have been made without rhyme or reason."

SET 172 · Idioms 1711–1720

1711. A wolf in sheep's clothing

■ A dangerous person masquerading as harmless.

"The charming investor proved a wolf in sheep's clothing."

1712. Word for word

■ Exactly as written or spoken; verbatim.

"He reproduced the passage word for word without attribution."

1713. Word of honour

■ A solemn and binding verbal promise.

"He gave his word of honour that the information would not be disclosed."

1714. Work against the clock

■ To work under intense time pressure.

"The medical team was working against the clock throughout the operation."

1715. Work hand in hand

■ To cooperate closely and effectively.

"The two agencies were required to work hand in hand."

1716. Work in one's favour

■ To contribute positively to one's prospects or position.

"The new developments worked very much in her favour."

1717. Work to rule

■ To perform one's duties with the absolute minimum required, as a form of protest.

"The staff voted to work to rule as a first step in their industrial action."

1718. Worth its weight in gold

■ Extremely valuable or useful.

"A skilled translator in such negotiations is worth their weight in gold."

1719. Worth one's salt

■ Good at one's job; competent and capable.

"Any scholar worth their salt would question such a claim."

1720. Wrap someone in cotton wool

■ To be overprotective of someone.

"Parents who wrap children in cotton wool do them a disservice."

1721. Write off as

■ To dismiss something as worthless or beyond recovery.

"His first attempt had been largely written off as a failure."

1722. The writing is on the wall

■ The signs of imminent failure or disaster are already visible.

"For any discerning observer, the writing was on the wall."

1723. Yield ground

■ To concede or surrender a position.

"Neither side was willing to yield ground on the core issues."

1724. Yield to temptation

■ To succumb to a desire one has been resisting.

"He eventually yielded to the temptation to publish the documents."

1725. Zero in on

■ To focus sharply and precisely on something.

"The investigation zeroed in on three key transactions."

1726. Zero tolerance

■ A policy of applying the full force of rules without exceptions.

"The institution adopted a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism."

1727. Zone in on

■ To focus precisely on a particular matter.

"The investigation zoned in on three specific transactions."

